

spare Rib

Women's Liberation Magazine

January 78 issue 66

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15 December. 1.10 *Bouncing Back*; 2.30 female sexuality workshop (women only); 5.00 alternative birth methods workshop; 7.00 music (with Saffron Summerfield); 8.00 *To the People of the World* (Women's Film Collective), *Women of Marrakesh* (women film crew Granada TV), *The Double Day* (International Women's Film Project).

16 December. 1.10 Dancing (Anna Wise); 2.30 third world, Irish, black women's workshop; 7.30 music (Frankie Armstrong); 8.30 *Voices*; 10.30 (Meg Christian and Teresa Trull).


17 December. 11.00 women and art workshop (women only); 12.45 *Shadow Women* (Tina Keane); 4.00 *A Litany for Women Artists* (Hannah O'Shea); 5.30 *Voices*; 7.30 music (Ova); 8.00 *Voices*; 10.30 music (Meg Christian and Teresa Trull).

18 December. 2.00 cream tea & classical music; 2.30 *Under Five's Show* (by Sidewalk Theatre); 4.00 readings from *The New Portuguese Letters* by the Three Marias; 5.00 women festival discussion and future plans; 7.00 music (Lindsey Cooper and friends); 8.00 *Voices*; later big jam session with Systerrock.

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the Leveller

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COVER

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November 12th.

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Addressing the Israeli Parliament in November
Egyptian president Sadat said that "the question of
the Palestinians is the crux of the entire problem".
He also reiterated that one of the conditions for a
lasting peace is that Palestinians be given their own
state on territory now held by Israel.

About 85,000 Palestinians live in camps in the
Lebanon. On p42 Rosemary Sayigh talks about how
the women cope with camp life.

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Mothers in the Movement

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
I was excited and moved by Terry Slater's article about her decision to have a baby and her subsequent experience.

Like Terry, I decided to have a baby on my own within a loose collective situation; like her, I ended up having to change this living situation and moving into a "couple with other people" instead (I had avoided living in a couple for several years previously); and like her, my relationships with some of my close women friends have suffered immeasurably.

It seems to me now that having a child is a much bigger thing than many of us feminists realise. We often seem to be naïve about such big guts-issue real life situations. I have however received great wealths of sensitive support and empathy from non-feminist non-political "ordinary" women with kids.

The experience of having a baby revolutionises your whole outlook on life—or at least it did mine—and you end up being really rather a different person. I've become more conventional, careful, settled; I experience great maternal feelings of love and protectiveness; I find it easy and not at all loathsome to sacrifice myself where the baby is concerned; and I don't care so much about myself and my career. (Hopefully some of these are only temporary.)

I don't think that feminism has come to terms with these sorts of changes at all. It is a cliché by now to say that the Women's Movement hasn't dealt properly with the larger area of children in general, but it is undeniably true. I've become exposed to all sorts of bitterness from feminist women with kids about this. We'd talked of it before of course, but it's quite a different matter now I have a child too. It's as though the floodgates have opened. The magnitude of this hurt and bitterness is very worrying, as is the subsequent alienation of many such women from the Women's Movement in general.

Our women's group which is made up of women who either work with or have kids, or both, is interested in continuing to bring some of this into the open, and we'd like to hear from any other groups similarly concerned. With best wishes and in sisterhood, Gill Hague, London N1.

Comeback on Colqhoun

* Dear Sisters,
I am so angry about your article "Colqhoun Sacked" by Aleine Ridge (Newshorts, SR 64). Who says Maureen Colqhoun was sacked for being a lesbian? It seems that you have fallen into all the traps this society sets in one article. 1) You believe everything you read in the newspapers. 2) You think that "important"

women, like Maureen Colqhoun are to be believed, while unimportant women (all those in Northampton Labour Party) need not even be asked their opinion.

As a member of the neighbouring constituency I can tell you that Northampton North Labour Party are fighting for the right to choose the person who represents them. In this area we are suffering from massive cuts in health expenditure—cuts in education—an inefficient SS system which frustrates the life of women who need to claim it. What do we hear from Maureen Colqhoun? Tales about bopping car park attendants, stupid comments about women drivers being incompetent and the "Powell statement"—made just a week before we were beginning an anti-racism campaign in Northampton!

The media's concentration on Maureen Colqhoun's lesbianism rather than her political ineptitude is the real example of their anti-feminist bias—after all a woman's sex life is always more important to a journalist than her political opinions.

Yours,
Marie Dickie,
Northampton.

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
While it is of course appalling that Maureen Colqhoun was sacked for being a lesbian, Aleine Ridge is wrong to say "male gays have never suffered this scale of attack". Jeremy Thorpe has been destroyed as a politician thanks to the hypocrisy of our society.

Maureen Colqhoun was hardly a flawless sister: she abandoned the attempt to filibuster the Abortion Amendment Bill last July to go on a tour of the US, leaving the other three Labour women MPs the gruelling task of talking for 15 hours each to stymie the Bill alone... The women's bitterness was more acute because it was Colqhoun who insisted she should be on the committee. Yours faithfully,
Jill Evans,
London NW6.

Vagina Regina?

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
Occasionally, *Spare Rib*, you surpass even yourselves in the unspeakable nonsense you deign to print.

In SR 62 Diane wrote to say that she "did not see the point of penetration" as she did not enjoy it. Well, indeed, I fail to see the point of actively pursuing anything we don't enjoy. It's a subjective business, of course.

This letter, however, evoked an extraordinary response from a duo (SR 64).

For this pair are in possession of vaginas (one apiece, I assume) capable of remarkable feats. Unlike those ordinary mortals amongst us who have only the standard cunt—you know, that nerveless orifice which our psyches can, on select occasions,

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LETTERS

invest with erotic possibilities—the organs of Mss Morgan and Nava are an accomplished set to be sure. They have emotions (they "want"); they are prehensile (they "reach"—where on earth do the Mss keep these things?); and they can commit weird atrocities upon transitive verbs (they "heat"—heat what, I wonder—baked beans? council flats?). There are apparently two kinds of sex—clitoral and vaginal (Shere Hite nothing). In the former, the orgasm is the ultimate goal (unlike any behaviour involving the penis—whose orgasm, I ask?), and "there is a separateness from the person we are with". Oh really? In the latter, however, "not only is it possible for each movement to be lingered over and enjoyed" (this can't happen otherwise, presumably), "it can be shared", (which is impossible, of course, in any other kind of love-making). But enough of this. If they had distilled their sentiments into the fewest possible words, it would have read like this:

Dear *Spare Rib*,
We like fucking.

Would you have printed that?
But let us leave the Mss to their paeans on the penis (whilst thanking them, after all these thousands of years, for their recommendation).

Spare Rib, you are in danger of becoming a soft porn magazine.

Once upon a time an intelligent woman called Shulamith Firestone wrote a book, *The Dialectic Of Sex*. She harked to a future earth where we would have outgrown our anachronistic and infantile fixation on the organs of reproduction. We would be free to explore ourselves, and each other, not as clits and cocks and cunts, but as something resembling human life. But all that's a world away.

* indicates that letters have been cut for reasons of space

Meanwhile, what can we do? We are free, if we want to be, from the mechanics of survival. Can we not summon up the imagination and courage to discover at least a hint of where our individual sexuality lies?
Yours sincerely,
Emerald Macneal,
London N4

Tooth and Male

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
I was interested to read of Ms Wise's dealings with the DHSS (SR 64). As I am a student with an unemployed husband, I asked my dentist for a DHSS form to request free treatment. I was astonished to see that the form was to be completed by all applicants, except married women! In that case, her husband should complete the form.

I ignored this, took the form along to my DHSS office and had a firm stroke placed through my signature. My husband voiced his disagreement but to no avail.

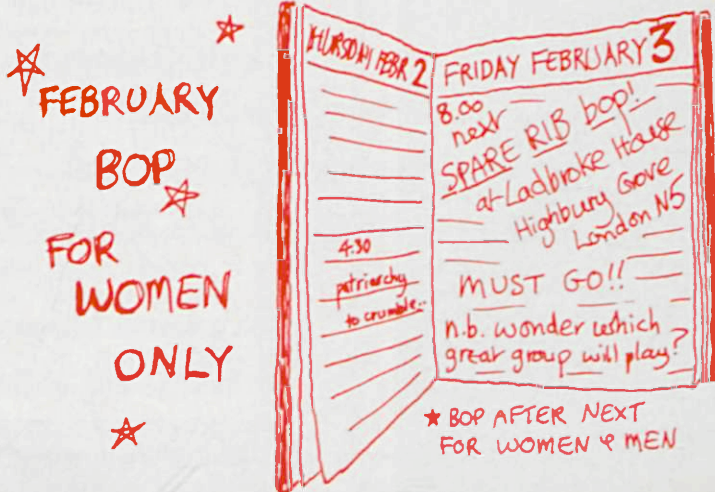
The Sex Discrimination Act has had a marginal effect but even this will be negated if the DHSS continues to pursue this ridiculous policy. Should married women have to choose between principles and their teeth?
In sisterhood,
Sheila Begley,
Durham.

The Final Solution?

* Dear Sisters, I feel that fascism is a big problem. We are obviously so weak, untogether, that such a male issue can be so disruptive, destructive.

The solution is to destroy the fascists (and the patriarchy) by using our strength. The theory being lesbianism, celibacy or masturbation. As long as women go on putting positive energy into them (fascists and men), we're going to be oppressed. All our hassles stem from the patriarchy—money, sex roles, violence, etc.

Leave your men now, we can't wait till we've all got businesses, houses—move while we've got the chance. What have we got to lose, their money, their values. They have the tools, we have the skill and knowledge and



intuition, they have the bullets, we have the blood, blood they can't waste.
Love and peace,
Jodi,
Edinburgh.

Bristol Women's Centre Statement

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Bristol Women's Centre arranged an Extraordinary General Meeting on the 14th November to discuss the ongoing conflict in their relationship with the Bristol Wages For Housework group. We were not questioning the right of women to believe in wages for housework nor were we questioning the fact that housework and financial independence are important issues for women, though most of us believe that the perspective of WfH is inadequate. However, their tactics are very disturbing.

Bristol Wages For Housework have in the past taken credit for other women's work, for example in rape action groups around the country, and have claimed that WfH are the only people doing anything. They have claimed that other women are supporting them when those women have specifically dissociated themselves from WfH's actions—an example was their Louise Boychuk petition which neither Bristol Gay Women's Group nor Louise Boychuk herself agreed with.

WfH use the Women's Centre for publicity but have withdrawn over several years from work alongside us. In fact they went down to the City Council asking for (demanding?) a women's centre during the same week that we were negotiating for new premises. This could have had disastrous consequences in the confusion it caused.

Concerning the letter from Norma Steele (SR 64), we were presented as unwilling to defend black women against the National Front. When we were holding our regular monthly meeting we arrived to be informed that a Black Women for Wages For Housework meeting that night had been threatened by the Front. We did send some women down to the meeting and they felt that the Front were not going to arrive—they didn't. However, we were prepared to suspend our general meeting and support the black women.

We have never questioned the autonomy of black women. Again, our support was requested by Black Women for WfH against a forthcoming Front meeting. When some women refused because they already intended to oppose the Front meeting and did not wish to do so on behalf of WfH, they were accused of being racist.

The emotional blackmail that is constantly used against us has, in the past, left women feeling silenced, stunned or shamed into

action they do not totally agree with. Because of these conflicts over the past two years, a proposal was passed stating that the activities of Bristol WfH will not be publicised in the Centre and the Bristol Women's Liberation newsletter unless a policy meeting had previously agreed. This does not exclude groups from giving support to WfH initiatives nor does it exclude women who believe or are active in WfH from any activity of the Centre. The decisions are reversible if our relationship with WfH improves.
Bristol Women's Centre,
44 The Grove,
Bristol BS1 4RB.

No More Easy Sex

* Dear *Spare Rib* Collective,
Can you explain something? Why do you support male indulgence? Men today enjoy sex without any problems for themselves—not even payment. Women's wombs are torn by abortions and bodies poisoned by pills. They carry the sex burden more now than ever before. Please stop saying this is liberation. It is increasing exploitation. *Spare Rib*, a halt on easy sex for men should be the campaign!
Anne Newland (Ms),
Rottingdean,



Women's Exhibition

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
We are mostly students in the department of Peace Studies involved with the course "Women In Society". As Bradford is a technically orientated university with more than twice as many men than women, we often find ourselves isolated, constantly having to justify our courses and especially Women's Studies. We decided to mount an exhibition called "Women—The Myth And The Reality".

It began by questioning the roles of Adam and Eve, followed by an introduction to the

Women's Movement and sections on the presentation of women in the media, "36-24-26, The Anatomy of Oppression". continued with sections on education (including statistics on the ratio of men to women both working and studying in the university), women at work (some excellent photographs), women in rock music, attitudes to rape, the armed services, women in the Third World, health, lesbianism and information on battered wives framing a cardboard Punch and Judy show. During the exhibition we played music by women songwriters and bands.

The last section consisted of two quizzes, one for each sex, followed by a roll of blank paper for comments. This soon got covered in scrawl, much of which was negative, but at least it gave us an idea of the response. The most direct challenges came from men, particularly lecturers, in defence of Christianity (ie anti-abortion) and their wives' household duties and motherhood.

Overall the section on rape attracted the most attention for it included some apparently earth-shattering facts on female sexuality.

We were only able to book exhibition space for five days, but have kept all the material together in the hope of showing it in colleges, libraries etc, or even adapting it for schools. If anyone is interested in borrowing the exhibition, or just talking about setting up their own, we would be pleased to help.
Love,
Miranda (Davies), Mary (Dawson), Ruth (Kenyon) et al.
Department of Peace Studies,
Bradford University.

How is 'Spare Rib' different?

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
I am a fifteen year old girl. I was interested in the article "A girl's best friend is her best friend" (SR 58), though I didn't agree with it.

I am working on a project about women's magazines and how the images of women have changed. I am working on how different *Spare Rib* is to a more traditional magazine. I wonder if any readers would know of any research that has already been done on this subject?

Yours sincerely,
Jakki Fergusson,
Leicester.

Suspicious Minds?

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
I would like to offer a different experience with WISP than the one recounted by Pam Lunn in SR 63. I received a WISP leaflet through the door and being rather intrigued that an Assurance company had figured out a policy for independent women, I filled in the brief form and sent it off.

At a time convenient to us both, a woman arrived. I found her help-

ful and even if she was in the business to sell me something, I was grateful for the opportunity to have life assurance/saving etc explained fully, and did not feel any pressure to sign up with her company (and in fact did not do so).

Pam Lunn had an unfortunate experience but I think it is too easy to be suspicious and immediately discount an idea which has some potential for furthering women's independence.

Sincerely,
Debbie Weinberg,
London NW1.

Red Army Faction

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
On the 18th October Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan Karl Raspe were found dead in their German prison cells, and Irmgard Moller was found critically wounded. Ingrid Schubert was later found hanged. We do not know whether they committed suicide, as is claimed by the West German authorities.

I have recently received information concerning the prison treatment of these "terrorists". Over half are women. Irmgard Moller, although seriously ill, has been prevented from seeing either her family or her lawyer. We do not know how she is being treated. I feel confused and disturbed by the political strategy of the Red Army Faction, and the women with whom I have spoken are either disgusted by their tactics or simply apathetic. In Europe our sisters are campaigning for access to Irmgard Moller, an end to all forms of psychological and physical torture and the right of Red Army Faction prisoners to be treated according to the Geneva Convention. What is the women's movement in Britain going to do? In sisterhood,
Caroline Sinclair,
Norwich.

In connection with our comment (SR 64 Letters), SPUC wish to say that they have no connection with the National Front.

In reply to *Spare Rib*'s allegations (November 1977) Women For Life wish to say that opposing abortion does not make anyone a National Front supporter, any more than opposing the Common Market does. The NF oppose abortion on different grounds from Women For Life—possibly because they want to increase the white birthrate. Women For Life believe in the intrinsic value of every human being—male or female, black or white—including unborn and handicapped children. This means that we would never co-operate with racist or sexist groups.

We have not knowingly marched with members of the National Front, and we have not seen one shred of evidence that this ever happened. We have however marched against the National Front and Fascism, and many of our members are active against the NF in their own areas.

Women For Life,
London E17.

HAIRY story

How many of us still secretly feel we're too hairy?

Alex Balsdon and Eva Kaluzynska describe body hair
—and when to start worrying about it.

We've been questioning why we make ourselves look the way we do for years now. In the Women's Liberation Movement we've discussed the images we have of ourselves, and though we can't claim immunity to the influences of fashion, we have become more aware of them and of the role 'looks' play in most women's lives.

We've also learnt a lot about the way our bodies work. Their specifically female functions have become less of a mystery to us as we've demanded the right to know what's going on inside us, how and why our natural rhythms and cycles affect our lives, how they can go wrong and how contraception, for instance, interferes.

But one aspect of our bodies has eluded a thorough public reassessment. Many of us still have to come to terms with our body hair. Why are we so sensitive about it?

The media—particularly women's magazines—have much to answer for. Even an early *Spare Rib* carried an article about 'natural' ways of 'coping' with body hair! But this July *Woman's Own* outdid them all with a really disgusting hair scare story.

Work hard and you'll grow hairy was the threat the magazine made to millions of readers in an article supposedly based on research by Professor Ivor Mills, billed as "top endocrinologist and Professor of Medicine at Cambridge University". The equation was crude: man's work equals man's hair. To compete in a man's world, you've got to *be* a man!

Ivor Mills also happens to run a clinic for women suffering from hormone imbalance. They provide him with the raw material on which to conduct his research. So he's drawing conclusions about all women from a highly selected sample, many of whom come to him specifically because of hair problems.

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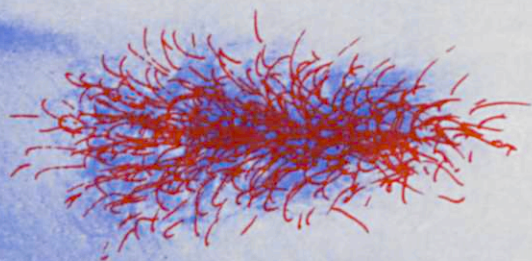
BEFORE Shock-o-Hair **AFTER:**

Posy

The *Woman's Own* article described a variety of disorders from which women may suffer if their hormonal balance is disturbed. It then claimed that when the "strain on a woman's brain and her coping powers" becomes too great, she may respond by producing more male sex hormone, androgens, than she should—in a physiological effort to make up for her incapacities perhaps?! Or she may have a decrease in male hormone production, in which case she'll become frigid.

Woman's Own put all the symptoms down to the stress of over-work—outside the home, that is. They implied that housework and typical women's jobs aren't really work. But a *career* is dangerous if you want to keep your femininity.

Take the item *Changing Sex* for instance. The context implied that this too is a hazard of 'man's work'. "In some very rare cases, increase of male hormone causes an enlargement of a woman's clitoris and vulva." True. It's also true that in some very rare cases (and some less rare, following alcohol abuse) increase of female hormone causes an enlargement of a man's breasts (gynaecomastia). In neither case are people suffering from such disorders changing sex; we suspect *Woman's Own* would hesitate to blame excessive zeal for washing up and nappy changing for gynaecomastia!



"Many women have excess hair," says the *Woman's Own* article. It is, in fact, "normal", in the magazine's opinion, for women to be too "hairy". This idea has been around for longer than the women's magazines, though.

Psychoanalysis sees hair as a symbol of the genitals. We tend to see body hair as "animal"—ie rampantly sexual—although the relatively hairless human is the only animal with a constant sex drive. Anthropologists have found links between shaving customs and enforced celibacy or ceremonial mutilation. So the obvious inference is that women in our culture are expected to castrate themselves, be female eunuchs in fact.

Both men and women in ancient Greece and Egypt used to "civilise" themselves by removing body hair. The Greeks did apply a double standard but only to pubic hair, which was considered hideous in women but an adornment to the male—some of the more enthusiastic neo-Freudians tried to revive this idea, to fill out the notion of penis-envy (Mary Ellman's very funny about this in *Talking About Women*). In Europe it seems the smooth feminine ideal was already enough of a cliché by the seventeenth century for Herrick to take a gentle rise out of it: O how I love my Julia's leg.

It is as white and hairless as an egg.

By the nineteenth century women were commonly developing skin ulcers from depilatories made out of lime and arsenic.

We haven't come that much further today. One thing women's magazines don't tell you about depilation is that it HURTS. Anything that destroys hair is likely to do the same to your skin. Men aren't the only ones to get shaving cuts, for a start. Electrolysis feels like red hot needles, can scar and often causes the hair to grow again elsewhere. "Cream depilatories smell awful and, if the explicit label instructions are not carefully followed, can cause irritation, allergic reactions, and eye injuries. Waxing, one of the oldest methods of hair removal, can be a masochistic trip. After the wax preparation is applied and allowed to harden, it is pulled off, taking both your hair and your breath away." (Harriet Lyons & Rebecca Rosenblatt, *Ms* July 1973).

Most women would find the idea of the "disorders" *Woman's Own* describes distressing, largely because they would be unable to argue back with a clear idea of what constitutes 'normal' hair for a woman. Almost everyone has their idea of 'normality' and tries to conform to it. But is one woman's idea of normal anything like another's? Do we pluck and trim ourselves because we fear we're abnormal?

As a basis for at least discussing these questions, this article describes body hair and the changes it usually undergoes at puberty in both women and men. We've added outlines of the main disorders which can provoke abnormal hair growth as one of their symptoms, in the hope that most women reading this will be reassured that they don't have any of them.

I used to be really worried no-one would find me attractive because I wasn't hairy enough.

I started growing hair on my chin when I went on the pill. When my doctor changed the brand, the hair stopped sprouting but what I had didn't go away.

I thought I was the only woman in the world with hair on her breasts.

I had a dream that the women's movement was being taken over by men pretending to be bearded women.

Everyone has hair almost all over their body. This hair is of two types. There is the fine down type called *vellus*, which covers the whole skin surface except for the palms and soles. Most of this down is almost invisible, though some women may find the vellus on their upper lip is darker. Vellus also grows all over the forehead, nose, back and other places we think of as hairless.

Terminal hair, such as that on the scalp and in the armpits, is coarser, thicker and pigmented. There is non-sexual terminal hair, such as eyebrows, eyelashes and scalp hair, which does not change significantly with puberty. Some of the sexual hair is similar in both sexes, for instance in the armpits and lower pubic regions. But men have additional sexual hair, on their faces for instance. Differences in body hair between men and women are quantitative, not qualitative.

The relative proportion of vellus and terminal hair, their distribution and the extent that one changes into the other at puberty is affected by an individual's hormone balance and also by genetic factors. So Mediterranean women tend to have more, darker hair in more places than do Scandinavian women.

Women have, however, been thoroughly persuaded that all hair except that of the scalp and eyes should always be invisible, at least in public.

Women's magazines recommend to us remedies for what they call our "excess" hair, with the effect of making us hairier than we might otherwise have been, since vellus is converted into terminal hair if removed with razor, wax or depilatory chemicals. The more you remove it, the faster and coarser it grows. The fair-haired woman can induce coarse, dark hair

OUCH!



on her legs if she persists; the Mediterranean woman living in this country can become convinced she is abnormally hairy by our standards and aggravate what she supposes to be her personal problem. Interestingly, in Latin countries it is only 'Upwardly mobile' women who remove hair.

Few women in this country have managed to resist removing body hair at some time. This means that many women don't know how much hair might have been 'normal' for them had they left it alone; neither do their sexual partners or doctors. □



My mother gave me a razor when I was 12. When I was first a feminist, I was defiantly not shaving my legs—not because it made me happy, but because I felt I shouldn't. But now I positively like having furry legs, though I feel awkward about them in summer—a response to the response I expect from other people.

HIRSUTISM—what causes it?

There are some conditions to which the body responds by growing hair, either in a specific place or all over. Such growth is commonly described as hirsutism.

The skin protects itself from persistent chafing by growing hair, as people who regularly carry loads on their backs know. Local hair growth may also occasionally be associated with birth marks.

Hirsutism can be due to an alteration in the normal amount of sex hormones circulating in the blood, but this is rare. An excess of body hair, whether confined to one area of the body or all over it, is not a 'disease' in its own right anyway. It is usually only one of several symptoms produced by a disorder elsewhere in the body.

CYSTS

The most common cause of generalised hirsutism is known as the polycystic ovary syndrome. In this condition, the ovary has on it a large number of cysts which stop it producing its hormones in the normal way.

Excess hair production is one symptom of the condition; others are scanty or absent periods, infertility, and sometimes obesity. Cysts tend to develop in the late teens or early 20s, but may appear for the first time in the late 30s.

TUMOURS

Tumours of the ovary or adrenal, a gland lying above the kidney, are very much rarer causes of hirsutism. Male hormones (androgens) are normally produced in both the adrenal gland and the ovary, but a so-called 'virilising' tumour on either of these glands may produce greater than normal levels of androgens.

The symptoms in these cases usually appear suddenly and include signs of 'virilism' such as acne, altered muscle bulk and strength, and clitoral enlargement as well as excess hair. The presence of such a tumour in no way means that a woman is changing sex.

There are other glandular disorders which can result in similar disturbances of hormone production, but they are all rare.

DRUGS

All synthetically prepared drugs prescribed for the various ailments from which we suffer have a variety of unwanted effects, called 'side effects' by the pharmaceutical industry. One of the unwanted effects of certain drugs may be to cause excess hair production in some people, and then probably only with long-term use.

The known offending drugs include:
• androgens—which may be included in the

'menopausal mixtures' of hormone replacement therapy

- ACTH—a hormone found in certain preparations used in the treatment of rheumatic diseases, bronchial asthma, adrenal malfunction and allergic conditions
- corticosteroids—widely used for rheumatic conditions, allergies and skin complaints
- phenytoin—an anticonvulsant drug used to control epileptic fits
- diazoxide—used to treat high blood pressure.

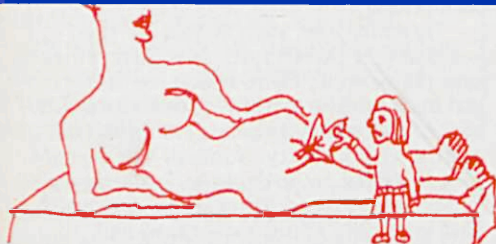
HORMONAL IMBALANCE

Hirsutism sometimes occurs after menopause, because of the considerable hormonal upheaval taking place. And hormones can be imbalanced after childbirth, while the system is readjusting to a non-pregnant level.

ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Food refusal to the point of emaciation in adolescent girls can sometimes cause excess hair production. This is rather ironic, since the current trend in psychiatric thinking is that anorexia is a subconscious attempt to delay the process of 'growing up', with which sexual hair is associated.

All of these conditions have one thing in common: the hirsutism is just one of several symptoms, probably the least of a sick woman's worries.



In "Dutiful Daughters" (ed. Jean McCrindle and Sheila Rowbotham) Fiona McFarlane talks about her embarrassment when buying sanitary towels from a male chemist:

It's ridiculous, isn't it, that we should be ashamed of something that's perfectly natural and normal, and we should be sort of shouting about there's nothing wrong with it, it's a perfectly normal function. It was like pubic hair. I thought there was something wrong with me yet again. My mother is very hairless and I hadn't seen my sisters'... I went to the art galleries and looked at the great paintings of nudes, just to see did they have this too, and of course they didn't—they didn't. So I was quite convinced that it was me—you know, I was terribly frightened of anyone ever finding out that I had this hair. It was just ridiculous.

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5'6" brunette Laura and tousled blonde Alison plunged into *Dazzlers* with feminist cudgels raised and restless eyes questing among the clothes rails.

Racked with illicit longings for filmy silks, satins and sequins, we'd imagined an Aladdin's Cave of lovely things, a transvestite's paradise. Well, there were two walls clothed in sugar-pink velvet, with a few pairs of shiny black cami-knickers splayed across them. And there were a few glittering knits and decollete gowns. But on the whole we were disappointed—the goods looked like any other boutique stuff to us. We asked Lesley what made *Dazzlers* clothes different. Glancing politely away from our multi-layered November styles, she declared "Everything at the moment is very big, very bulky. And there simply isn't anything that's small, skinny, sexy, and tight." We quickly pulled off a few sweaters (the central heating was fierce) and demanded to know what gave Lesley the idea that women were not feminine enough—weren't they already putting enough labour-time into dressing to please men?

"I don't think that really—I think that there are just very few show-stopping clothes around. And I think it's quite good for any woman's morale to stomp into a party wearing something which is absolutely bound to stop the party dead in its tracks."

And then what? we wondered. Laura was eyeing a row of backless dresses and I was visualising myself in some skintight lurex pants. "After that it's entirely up to you, whether you've got enough going upstairs. You could look great in the clothes but be terribly dull—in which case the clothes aren't going to help you one iota."

So how did Lesley work out her criteria of sexiness and what would attract men?

"You do a bit of market research, you wear your own samples to parties and if ten total strangers ask you for your phone number it's got to be good." For strangers, read men.

But how did other women react—wasn't she worried about making whole rooms-full of women feel competitive and outsmarted?

"Well, most intelligent women would immediately say 'That looks great, where did you get that?'"

Our reflections in the plate glass stared back at us gloomily. Against the lush pink background we saw our faces bled of colour, our noses turning red, and our dungarees and comfy skirts swell and lose their shape. Determinedly we asked if Lesley ever dressed to please herself, or other women.

These Clothes Have Jaws

It's the party season again so Spare Rib fashion newshounds descended on Dazzlers, a new boutique just opened among the swish theatres and demolition sites of London's fast-changing Covent Garden. Run by ex-Biba's Lesley Lake, Dazzlers, sells only "clothes designed to pull a man—at any time from 9am today to 9am tomorrow."

"I don't dress to please men," she protested. "I dress to knock men out." Lesley was beginning to seem as confused as we were about the whys and wherefores of dress, image, and such things.

"There's no way a man could dictate what one wears," she continued firmly, "I mean, a man might grant that something is very attractive on someone else, but wouldn't want his wife to wear it because it would be too provocative . . ." Men, after all, are too erratic and emotional to be the arbiters of taste. We asked Lesley—an ex-Spare Rib reader—what she thought of women's liberation ideas which challenge the

compression of women into sex objects.

"I'm totally women's lib, but I've always worked in areas like public relations or journalism where women are not discriminated against, so it's never happened to me. I feel very strongly about being independent: I buy my own cars, my clothes, pay for my own jewellery. But I don't necessarily see you've got to cut out clothes, particularly pretty clothes—you have to buy clothes anyway so it might as well be fun. I don't feel it's particularly pandering to a male ego."

We put it to her that her selling line was explicitly pandering to the male ego as well as feeding on women's insecurities.

"It's clothes to pull a man, yes," she admitted. "But you are doing the pulling. He's not. It's a very different ballgame. If you walk into a party it's not 'That guy that fancies you' it's you saying 'I want that'." Lesley pointed one long-lusted nail straight at an imaginary male quarry. I believed her utterly.

"And if you look good enough, at least your options are open." And if you're over size 14 your options are closed, incidentally, at *Dazzlers*.

By this time we were half-convinced that Lesley was elaborating a new variation on A Woman's Right To Choose, so we asked what she would dress us in, to bring us up to these standards of confident consumerism.

"I'd like you in these gold bomber jobs," she decided, holding out the gold lame astronaut suit I'd already had my eye on, and adding a see-through black top—altogether about a hundred quid's worth. For Laura, a backless evening gown with sequin trim.

Prancing around in drag in this all-female environment was great fun, but we felt we'd never be able to cope with men's response to our new image, and we said so.

"But the kind of people who read *Spare Rib* should be able to cope with it very easily—I mean, you're aiming at a pretty intelligent market. That's all it takes."

Swirling her graceful evening skirt, Laura pursued the point. "I'd like to feel you could walk about in what you liked, too, but in the summer if I'm wearing just a T-shirt I can feel men's eyes burning on my breasts—which aren't even particularly enormous or wonderful—I'm just very conscious of that happening all the time."

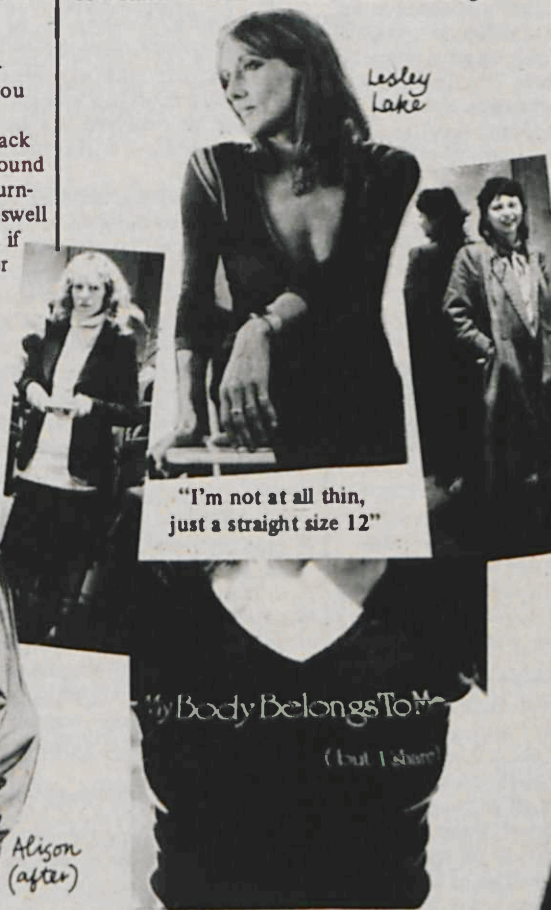
"Are you?" said Lesley. "I'm very short-sighted myself. So I miss an awful lot."

"Ah," Laura mused, "maybe that's how it's done." □

Alison Fell



Alison (after)



"I'm not at all thin, just a straight size 12"

"I've seen a couple of . . . well, not dowdy, but unremarkable birds put them on, and you see the confidence right away"



Laura (after)

NEWSHORTS

Law gone wrong

The 13-year-old girl who took laxative tablets and sat in a hot bath in an attempt to miscarry (SR 65) should never have been prosecuted, admits the Department of Public Prosecution.

The Home Secretary is to recommend a royal pardon for her and her 16-year-old brother, who gave her the tablets. The law used against them, Section 58 of the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, should be used only "in exceptional circumstances"—it probably hadn't been used this century. □

Beware Primodos

Primodos is the only remaining drug used for hormonal pregnancy testing. Even though GPs had been warned in June '75 against this way of testing by the Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM), no less than 8,000 prescriptions were given for Primodos as a pregnancy test in the 12 months to July '77.

A 1972 survey established that drugs like Primodos (also used against secondary amenorrhea, uterine bleeding and general anxiety) may damage the foetus.

The CSM issued a new warning to doctors last November not to prescribe the tests. Its basis was a governmental study which showed that of 836 mothers whose babies were born with malformations, 93 had taken a hormone pregnancy test. □

A dynamic fight

Originally thought of as a discussion on legislation to ensure our abortion rights, November's regional National Abortion Campaign conference in Sheffield ended up as a broad discussion on the future of the campaign.

Although we may well be faced with another bill to fight in the near future, there was a strong feeling that part of the weakness of NAC is its tendency to limp along from one fight against parliamentary restriction to the next. We need a more positive and dynamic fight, alongside the struggle to keep what rights we have.

A positive bill would not provide the focus we need—it would be better to strengthen the campaign locally round the fight for out-patient facilities and against the cuts, with a strong emphasis on what we want.

We discussed whether NAC should broaden out from being a single issue campaign—its narrowness may be partially responsible for its current inertia. Reports from some areas suggested that NAC groups had begun to link up with, for example, self help groups, nursery campaigns and cuts committees. The slogan 'A Woman's Right To Choose' means much more than just abortion on demand—at a minimum, our publicity should place a greater emphasis on these other aspects. This debate is not new in NAC but many of us feel it is central. □

Felicity Callow Sheffield NAC



The latest tablets GPs are being asked to push are called 'Comploment'. They're for women on the pill who "get the blues", feel weepy, irritable and anxious—this tablet is supposed to lift you up again. So take the pill, down some other pills and you'll have boosted the profits of the pharmaceutical industry as well. □

Victory - with caution

Women's Aid was very pleased by the recent Appeal Court judgement which, by a majority of three to two, set aside previous decisions which declared that an unmarried battered woman had no right to exclude her man from the house even where she is a joint tenant (see SR 65).

Obviously this decision is a great relief to the woman concerned, but we're cautious about greeting this "Mistress's Charter" (as the papers call it) with unbridled joy. There's little doubt that an appeal will be made to the House of Lords and the decision could be reversed yet again. Also, the judges continually referred to council housing and concern for the children—so we have yet to see what effect the decision will have on childless women and those in privately owned or rented accommodation.

The Lords have apparently agreed to hear this case urgently and we hope the intervening period will not prove to be a limbo for battered women, with county court judges feeling uncertain of using the Domestic Violence Act at all. □

National Women's Aid Federation

STOP PRESS: When the woman returned to the flat, which she'd left during the case, she found it completely stripped—even the carpets and child's things had been taken by the man she'd been living with. "At least he left the kitchen sink," she said. □

Licence to kill

John Marsden, a 23-year-old Nottingham miner who battered his four-month-old daughter to death, was jailed for six years for manslaughter. Brian Smedley, Marsden's defence lawyer, pleaded diminished responsibility. Apparently responsibility diminishes when you suffer from regular headaches, and when you're "doing all the work a wife should have done". What can you expect? "He was on the night shift and his wife was working during the day, which meant that he was left at home to do all the chores," Smedley concludes that "he was not a violent man, just an ordinary person driven beyond human endurance." What if Marsden had been a woman... imagine the outrage... □

Get your cash rebates now

From November 14, the maximum rent rebates and allowances given by local authorities to their own tenants and to tenants of private landlords rose to £8 outside London and £13 in London.

Women, because they earn less than men, pay a far higher proportion of their incomes in rent. So although they must never be seen as a substitute for better pay for women, rebates and allowances can be worth getting as a short term solution to financial hardship. You can find out whether you

BRADFORD WOMEN'S AID LEAFLET



BRADFORD BATTERED WOMEN NEED A REFUGE

Battered women in Bradford need a safe place to go to. They need a house where they and their children need not sit in fear of more violence towards them. A place where they can stay until she decides whether or not to go back to the relationship and try again. If she decides not to return, she can stay in a refuge until any legal proceedings are over and she has somewhere else to live.

Apparently the Head of Social Services maintains that "most of these battered women are of low intelligence and on the game". Well, on 26 November, 250 of "these women" and many others marched to demand a refuge. A whole coachload came from the Leicester refuge with brightly placarded pushchairs.

The public order situation in Bradford has been really tight since recent clashes with the

National Front. On the morning of this demonstration, local firemen's wives also held a march; they had to go all the way to Wakefield to get police permission. Every effort was made to dissuade Bradford Women's Aid from demonstrating at all, and on the day the march was diverted to a shorter, less visible route—ostensibly to avoid a football match, though other more public routes would have been possible. □

Not just getting cats out of trees

A group of about 50 women, many with their kids, marched round Romford marketplace, Essex, on November 16, with a surprising number of photographers and reporters milling round. It was the first time since the firemen's strike began that the women had organised anything like it. Unlike recent press reports of the way that "Leyland wives urge hubbies back" (still you can't believe all you read in print) these women were determined that the strike was going to be won: "If they settle for anything less than 30% my husband's going to have problems getting back through the front door."

After undergoing extensive training for five years, a fireman takes home about £46 a week—not much for a family of four to live on.

But as Jennifer Duggan went on to say, the pressure isn't just financial: "I can't talk to my husband when he gets in—the job makes him so tense and ill. When I tell him his dinner's in the oven or something, he often just tells me to shut up. It's not just the money but the misery caused by the pressure of the job... it's not all about



MARK RUSHER (IFL)

getting cats out of trees."

They marched all the way round the market, holding placards and shouting slogans: "If we want to live in peace, we must get rid of Merlyn Rees". Shoppers looked a little surprised (a demonstration in Romford, whatever next) but nearly all seemed to support it. "Next time we'll take over Oxford Street" one woman shouted.

At the end, people stood round discussing what to do next. One suggestion was to visit all the Fleet Street papers to complain about biased coverage. As Maureen remarked, "If a soldier is overcome by smoke it's front page news, but it happens to firemen all the time, and you never hear about that." Eventually the freezing weather got through the extra coats and pullies, and people

drifted away.

Afterwards a few supporters stopped at a local fire station to talk to the men who were picketing. They talked a lot about the dangers of the job and the lack of money, but not at all about the way it affected their lives at home. It's not very surprising, but it showed up the different ways women and men experience the effects of work.□

are entitled to a rebate or allowance from your local town hall, Citizens Advice Bureau, housing aid centre etc. The scheme takes into account a combination of three factors—your income, family size and the amount of rent you pay. For example, if you are a single parent with two children, earning about £40 a week gross and paying a rent of £13 a week you would get a rebate or allowance of nearly £10 a week. A single woman with no children earning £40 would receive nearly £3 back on a rent of £9 a week.

Take-up is highest in the council rented sector, where 75-80% of eligible tenants receive rebates. In the private sector, where so often the rents are higher the allowance scheme has been markedly less successful. It is estimated that less than half eligible private tenants claim allowances.

Rent allowances, paid in the form of a cash rebate, are available to tenants living in furnished or unfurnished property, whether the landlord

lives on the premises or not, and can, at the local authority's discretion, be paid to a person whose name is not on the rent book. This means that a deserted wife or cohabitee who is not named as the tenant can be treated as such for the purposes of the rent allowance; but can also mean that two women living together can both be asked about their income and the local authority can choose the higher earner as the person to whom it pays the (reduced) allowance.□

Rights of Women collective

GLC's final solution

On October 31 the Greater London Council Housing Committee announced a final solution to the "squatting problem". All squatters in GLC properties had to register within 28 days, after which they would be offered tenancies in "hard to let" properties. If they don't register they

will be evicted. The squatters will be given only one choice of accommodation. The GLC have covered themselves in terms of publicity—people who find themselves on the streets "have only themselves to blame".

Among squatters are families who've already moved out of unbearable ancient council estates to squat houses where their children can have more space. Also the GLC didn't mention that squatters are already in hard to let or unlettable properties that they've had to partially rehabilitate (rewiring and plumbing them)—why can't they stay there as tenants?

The Tory party's housing policy is towards owner occupation and away from tenancies—that's why they've started their lottery where they sell run-down properties for £7,000. So they've eliminated squatting with this registration scheme and the new Criminal Trespass Law, but what happens to the homeless people now and in the future who

cannot afford to join the lottery or to pay the rents in the private sector?□



NEWSHORTS

Inheritors of a Women's Crusade

The Josephine Butler Society began with the fight against the Contagious Diseases Acts, introduced in 1869 to pave the way for state-licensed brothels in England by "regulating" prostitutes—any woman living in a designated trial area of the Channel Ports could be arrested on suspicion, subjected to forcible medical examination and interned in a block hospital if any kind of infection was discovered. Women were frequently interned for minor sexual infections, or for leading an unorthodox sex life; after internment the woman would be registered as a common prostitute so most other forms of occupation would be closed to her.

As a health measure the Acts were useless since the male clients were never examined. Josephine Butler fought the Acts as an injustice to women and a repressive measure of public control. Her companions were feminists and labour activists. This was one of the first feminist actions to cut across class lines: middle-class women hired radical lawyers and fought internment through the Plymouth and Southampton courts. The Acts were repealed in England after a 20 year battle, but the Society was never disbanded. In the nineteenth century it went on campaigning to raise the age of consent from 12 to 16 and prevent the sale of child prostitutes to the legal brothels of Europe.

More recently the Society



Josephine Butler, from the Society's Xmas card, price 4p

opposed the Wolfenden Report and the Street Offences Act which made soliciting a crime for women but let male kerb-crawlers off free; supported Robin Corbett's bill to prevent a woman's sexual history being used as evidence in rape trials; and recommended 16 as the age of consent for both men and women, gay and straight. The initial fire of the Contagious Diseases campaign has long since gone but as a pressure group the Society has a record I admire. So I was glad to attend their AGM and see a showing of their film for television's Open Door programme.

The film made some neat visual comparisons between almost identical soliciting and kerbcrawling sequences—Spot the Offence—and also pointed out that by clearing prostitutes off the streets Wolfenden had made it harder to trace missing girls who might want to leave the life. Joan Jones gave a moving rape testimony and the Society's secretary made

a point that sadly needs to be repeated after a hundred years, that brothels are no defence against rape and "no woman should be set aside to gratify the sick appetites of a pervert".

But the section on the age of consent was disquieting, resorting to scare stories about teenage VD and suggesting that abortion complications were more common in minors—I was afraid unsympathetic doctors might use this kind of reason to force young women into the much more disastrous experience of unwanted motherhood. During question time the same gynaecologist Dame Josephine Barnes, put not only VD but cervical cancer down to female promiscuity—not a word about male sexual hygiene.

There was an excruciating song aimed at discouraging youthful over-indulgence, two wholesome ladies in Laura Ashley dresses singing: *Better to wait Till you find the right mate, A lover and friend You will find in the end, You may set a fashion For lasting passion...*

It was sad to see inheritors of a women's crusade dismissing rape crisis centres—"I should think they would make the problem worse... We should use existing channels... we need more woman police officers". And even sadder that it was only men who came to the defence of prostitutes when a Salvation Army officer suggested that most women go on the game to pay for a new washing machine and "Isn't greed really the problem?" It was left to a visitor to get to the heart of the matter: "Men have all the good jobs, prostitution's one way of getting some of the

money back... Would men ever give up the idea of having prostitutes?" Guest speaker: "There'll always be sick men and sick women"... visitor: "It's a sick society." Later another visitor, from California, turned to me and said, "You know, in the United States we would have had representatives of the prostitutes speaking here tonight." Perhaps some time in the future the society will again organise more closely with the women themselves. □

Amanda Sebestyen

The Society's unique collection of books and documents has been recently rehoused with the Fawcett Library in the City of London Poly. The library includes the Josephine Butler Clearing House which aims to be a centre of reference for research workers on aspects of prostitution. There's also a newsletter with a complete list of recent publications. Available from the Josephine Butler Society, 49 Hawkshead Lane, North Mymms, Hatfield.

A man who cares!

"If I were a Nun, I can think of no higher honour to serve God than to give a sick man my body." This touching thought comes from John Campbell, restaurant proprietor and one of a growing number of men who are agitating for legalisation of prostitution. Campbell (whose restaurant at one time sported topless waitresses) would like to see prostitution taken off the streets—where it upsets respectable people and encourages protection rackets with a attendant thuggery—into the privacy of the home. It is the advertising of these services which he wants to see legalised, licensed, and controlled by "public companies quoted on the stock exchange. People who can't be leant on." □

SPAIN: Adultery Pact

As part of their political pact with Suarez's centre-right government, Spain's political parties have agreed to legalise divorce and contraception (though not abortion) and to abolish adultery as a crime, incorporating it instead into the divorce laws, as a *civil matter*.

As yet this pact is only a declaration of intent, but the reforms will be carried out once the deputies have finished rewriting the constitution some time next year.

At present it is illegal to prescribe or sell contraceptives except for "medical reasons" (to regulate periods). Most doctors refuse to do so. But since the elections in June (see SR 60) self help birth control

clinics have mushroomed in the cities and the government has not tried to suppress them.

The new law will make their existence legal. Women in rural areas will at last be able to demand some sort of contraceptive service.

The laws against divorce and adultery are now so severe that a woman risks losing her children if she has any sort of sexual relationship, even ten years after separation from her husband; divorce is not allowed under any circumstances. Women can get up to six years in prison for adultery (see SR 54) and six years if they abort. Constitutionally, the father has complete control over children under the law of

"patria potestad". This too is to be changed to give the mother equal rights.

Just how radical the changes will be, in particular whether divorce is to be based on mutual consent or culpability, depends very much on the support feminists can muster in the Cortes (Spanish Parliament). Whatever happens, it'll be a start. □ Jenny Rathbone

Courts contempt

Two men accused of rape were let off because the woman involved reached the courtroom late, lost in the confusing layout of Birmingham Crown Court. She arrived just in time to see the men cleared, on police evidence only.

The woman couldn't recognise

her own case on the court-list, because the Midland Circuit protects men in rape cases by not naming them unless they're found guilty—isn't this taking anonymity to extremes?

When her MP (Bruce George, Walsall South) made a fuss, she was granted a police apology—but no re-hearing. The Lord Chancellor kindly advised that it "would be wise" for lawyers and police to meet and discuss the public's problems finding their way round the court.

On 28 November women picketed the Home Office to demand a public statement from the Home Secretary on the way courts are handling rape cases. It was organised by Women Against Rape who say that recent court decisions have given men, especially those in the Armed Services, a licence to rape. □

USA: Looks Discrimination

Two medical students are fighting court cases in the USA claiming sex, race and "looks" discrimination.

Charlotte Horowitz was kicked out of the University of Missouri Medical School just before graduation, despite being a top student—she had a bachelor's degree and a masters in psychology before even applying to Missouri, where she got excellent results.

But apparently she didn't have the correct bedside manner. In court she was described as "unkempt, unattractive and overweight", not what the faculty wanted "in terms of personal appearance", and with a slight speech impediment. She's accused of being dirty and not getting on with patients or doctors. What's worse she's a middle aged female New York Jew. Her tutor wrote to the chairman of the university's council on evaluation at the end of her first year: "Charlotte, by good

or bad fortune, is a New York Jewess and perhaps her hyper-criticality and tendency to complain can be attributed to her heritage.

"Her personal habits may leave something to be desired by most people. She also has the added burden of being a female with an IQ and accomplishment thus far in her career superior to most males who are her superiors by position."

Evidently this wasn't outspoken enough; Charlotte still lost her case in July—the court saw it as an infringement of the right of universities to judge applicants' qualifications—so it went to the Supreme Court on November 7. We don't yet know the result.

Lillie Walker, thrown out of George Washington University Medical School, claims that her expulsion was "arbitrary and irrational", based on prejudices about her race and personal appearance.

At the institute where she

was placed for her "clerkship", she was black in a staff all white but one Asian. She too is accused of bad relationships and sloppy dress—wearing "clothing which was inappropriate in that she had apparently gained weight and her clothes were too tight". Lillie admits she's overweight but says she took special care to be tidy at the institute. She often wears long dresses and suspects that may be deemed "inappropriate", along with her Afro-style hair.

And then there were her expressions. Her supervisor, Dr Norman Karl, said she would "frequently sit in patients' meetings staring, with her eyes rolled up toward the ceiling—a very bizarre bit of behaviour".

"If," replies Lillie, "you sit in a room and there's something absurd going on, you roll your eyes." □ Jill Nicholls

Thanks to "off our backs"

Up against the Front

On November 22 a National Front meeting was scheduled at Sefton Park School, in the heart of Bristol's black community. Over 90% of parents signed a petition opposing the meeting, but local officials still refused to discuss a cancellation. So at short notice local people organised a mass picket, schools boycott and parents' meeting.

That day 40 of Sefton Park's 220 children stayed home. Montpelier and St Pauls Parents and Friends along with Black Women for Wages for Housework organised the boycott. In one school in St Pauls, the West Indian area, half the parents kept their children away.

In the evening 1,000 people—including representatives of community and anti-fascist groups—picketed outside the school where a few Front members were meeting. At first police insisted demonstrators should stay in a side road away from passers-by, but finally said they wouldn't mind "a few ladies" in the main road; so the Bristol Women's Centre contingent surged out with their banners and leaflets. Response was good though the police made five arrests. □

NEWS COPYDATES

SR 67—December 29

SR 68—January 26

If it's urgent, it's worth trying after these dates.

* Old Bailey judge King-Hamilton advised 23-year-old George Helford from West Ham, who robbed a man at knifepoint, to get married—it provides a steadying influence and security...

* American researchers have discovered an island off the coast of Southern California where 14% of seagulls are "lesbians"...

* Thirty-five 14- to 16-year-old girls went on strike—picketing their school in Norwich—for not being allowed to wear trousers even in cold weather...

* 45-year-old Ruth Van Herpen from Newbury kissed a painting in the Oxford Museum of Modern Art "to cheer it up. It looked so cold". Her lipstick caused £700 damage. In court she admitted the damage, but the case was adjourned for psychiatric and social reports. I suppose human warmth is rare these days...

* Woolworths have decided to recognise the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers to negotiate pay and conditions for staff—Wow.

On appeal...

* The Civil Service has been told to end its upper age limit of 28 for taking executive jobs. Linda Price



claimed it discriminated against women who take time out of paid employment to have children. This ruling is important as it deals with indirect discrimination and acknowledges that women are entitled to enter new careers after having children. But the target date for revising the age limit is 1980—too late for Linda who has found another job in the 21 months of legal battling...

* Janet Krenzell, a builder sacked for swearing (SR 58) has lost her appeal...

* Eileen Garland, a clerk with British Rail, is entitled to the same free travel concessions for her family when she retires as men get. This new decision could affect 25,000 women in British Rail and its subsidiaries...

Three of the four Grunwick workers who staged a three-day hunger strike outside the TUC before the general council meeting on November 23. "Drowning in sympathy but starving for action" read their placards—they are desperate for the TUC to act on its resolutions and cut off essential services to the factory.

APEX retaliated by cutting off their strike pay and suspending them from the union, threatening others on the strike committee with similar treatment. And embarrassing the general council didn't get them far—it still decided not to back action by service workers and to await the outcome of ACAS's appeal to the House of Lords. Things look gloomy for the Grunwick strikers. □

Support to Grunwick Strike Committee, Brent Trades and Labour Hall, 375 High Road, Willesden, London NW10.

Changing Childcare

Most people were brought up in families. And most people see the family as the only place to raise their own children. But in recent years ideas about new ways of living and bringing

up children have grown among feminists. Part of the search for alternatives springs from purely practical causes—single parents and children must live somewhere when marriages break up, which they do in thousands every year, and sharing is cheaper and more sociable than living alone. And part comes from a political questioning of the family unit and the role it plays in oppressing women and children. In the family the burden of childcare falls heavily on the mother. Collective childcare aims to shift this rigid division of labour, sharing the work and responsibility and also allowing children a wider range of adults to relate to. Marsha Rowe talked to collective households in Leeds, Manchester and London, and examines in a series of three articles what happens to women, men and children in these attempts to live in new, more open ways. The first article focusses on the experiences of women who are not parents themselves, but who become involved in sharing the work and pleasure of other people's children:

Collective childcare is a creative commitment which has absorbed the energy of many women in the women's movement who do not have children themselves. Often their involvement began as an inspiration to help single or unsupported mothers. Alison, who now lives in a collective household in Leeds, recalled how her involvement began: "I was living in Oxford in an area where there were a lot of people I knew, with Hugo and Roger, and then a woman arrived from London who was pregnant and had nowhere to live." Sometimes it was battering which provoked a wife to search for a new life. Jenny, from London, became involved with Babs and her children in this way: "A group of us had taken a decision to live together. Babs was a battered wife we met a couple of years previously in the Claimants' Union. She had Andy and another boy."

For another mother who had been isolated, Jodie's household in Manchester provided an alternative: "Louise had been on her own with the baby because her husband was away a lot, and they lived abroad." When Louise returned she welcomed getting into a situation where she didn't have total responsibility. Fiona and her daughter Magda moved into Alison and Wendy's Leeds house when her personal trials became overwhelming: "After her husband went into prison Fiona freaked out and Magda had been put into care where she called the people 'mother' and 'father'. Magda was withdrawn and pasty, with bad nappy rash. Fiona had only had her back about two months. We each met her and in a week we were all looking after Magda."

At times the response of the women without children was spontaneous: "I don't remember making any decision to say, yes, I'd be involved in collective childcare; it was all based on trust and naivete." It was something they felt fitted in with the particular directions of their own lives, so that their needs and the needs of the mothers appeared to meet in the collective form of life. There was the desire for kinship with other women, to share domestic labour between the sexes, to work for more equal and supportive relationships amongst each other. And it was combined with a collective solution to economic inequality in one of the Manchester households when everyone shared their money, which gave the collective childcare a financial foundation.

There were already two children in Jodie's household when Fran decided to move in. Inexperienced, she had assumed that babysitting would not mean any alteration in the pattern of her existence. Subsequently it brought a profound personal change, in her, a tie of feeling which, she puzzled, might not have happened if the children "had been younger, and if they went to bed earlier". The children played their part: "Christine in particular makes a lot of fuss. At the best of times she doesn't go to bed before 9.30-10.30. She goes through whole acts of sabotage, like putting vinegar in the honey." Fran feels that now her identity is bound up with the children and it is impossible to extricate herself from the relationship.

Women's susceptibility to taking on a nurturing role was also

a motive, as when two of the women, Wendy and Jenny, agreed to help after they became unemployed: "I thought what an altruistic thing it would be to look after other people's kids." The duty to care, the old duty of femininity, lay hidden underneath their feminist aim to find a new form for the family. The contradiction only revealed itself to Jenny after she returned to her job: "I was unemployed at the time so I had more time to relate to the kids, and I think it was quite a mistake really because I haven't got the time now and I've still got the emotional bond."

For Alison, who at the time thought procreation was repugnant, collective childcare was a chance to be close to children without pregnancy. When she decided to help bring up a friend's baby two weeks after the birth, she realised the memory of her own upbringing initiated the idea of changing the parent-child relationship: "My mother was a very active, energetic woman and yet she felt she should stay at home and look after me, so there was all this energy going onto me. It was claustrophobic." To Alison and the others in her household, the relationship of love in childcare presented itself as an area of personal politics. They decided to set up a creche to share the work and to change the nature of parental love, to divide and share the emotional labour: "It was getting away from the idea of nuclear relationships where the children have to get their whole satisfaction and emotional support from just one person."

"Children are a part of the housework rota"

Rotas are a "practical necessity" in most of the households and are usually sorted out into specific tasks rather than days of the week. In one household it is "Getting them up, dressing, taking them to school or nursery, picking them up, and being around until other people get in from work, then feeding them and putting them to bed." The weekend rota stays the same but people don't put their names on a list: "It depends on who's around and mucking in."

Rota systems have dangers. Jenny expressed worry that the children lose their identity as growing human beings and become mere extensions of a timetable, fragments of the housework. "Children are part of the housework rota." She feels divided against herself in going along with the mothers' distance from the children: "I'm thinking of these children as a duty but it's part of the whole definition of this house."

However, without a structure, Jodie doesn't know where she is at times, and it produces hesitation and worry in her relationship to the mother of the child. She feels torn between anxiety that she doesn't contribute enough to the childcare, and that if she did more she'd be 'intruding' on Louise's relationship to the



child: "I put Susan to bed if Louise is going out early, or if I want to, or if Susan wants me to. It's difficult because I don't think I can take any initiative over it." She is hesitant, reluctant in the face of the authority of the mother. But she stresses too, that it's not a personal problem between her and Louise but part of the wider issue of having responsibility without control which is the cause of her conflict: "Sometimes I have to put her to bed, but without deciding how, why, or when."

A passionate commitment

The activity of childcare calls on women without children in the same way as it does mothers, absorbing their being and dissolving their identity: "No matter what you plan, a child's needs can just override all effort at organisation." A full day's childcare is "mind-deadening", "grinding", the day is "bitty", divided into many distracting facets and it seems impossible to find the space or concentration even to write a letter. The childless woman's existence can, like the mother's, flee from her control, her sense of self vanish, to be replaced by the meaningless, moody reflection of an unceasing flow of demands and tasks.

It is in the context of their feelings about children and the transformation of themselves during childcare that women find themselves in particular conflict. The women who are not mothers but who have devoted endless energy to childcare have found themselves past the point of detachment from the children. Unlike nursery workers or childminders, their care for the children extends over 24 hours and they become non-biological parents. There is a passionate presence to their commitment which they feel parents and outsiders have not understood or have disregarded. They learn a parent's responses to the children: "We worry about the kids being ill, etc, just the same," and grief

over the loss of a child expresses the intensity of the relationship, undefined yet deeply loving.

Parents have asserted their proprietorial rights over children and taken them away from collective households without considering this relationship. The pain expressed by Alison was tumultuous and engulfing: "Cass left just over a year ago. After being with a group of us for 3½ years, he suddenly disappeared. It was really terrible. I experienced Cass being taken away as much worse than my mother dying, much worse than any sexual relationship being broken up. A lot of summer is blanked out because the feeling was so bad. If I had been the biological mother everyone would have been very understanding. People don't understand how you can feel about a child who didn't come out of your own body."

Birth into a collective

The sense of renewal, the joy, fascination and revival of wonder which come at the birth of a baby are not merely the prerogative of maternity. The birth can also be a tender, shared re-discovery of energy for non-biological parents. The mothering can be undertaken by a group from the child's first weeks of life. In Alison's household this happened twice and she talks about the children with the familiar, confident knowledge usually only associated with a mother: "She had the baby in hospital and came out after 48 hours. She only breast fed for two weeks so we were all taking turns to get him up at night. Cass was a very easy baby, he slept lots, woke up and was fed and went back to sleep. He was pretty cheerful. He was 13½ months when Maya was born. Maya wasn't breastfed because Penny couldn't manage it and so that meant everyone shared it as before. When she was a tiny baby she slept in a carrycot in different people's rooms." ➤

Changing Childcare

A complex creche system

This particular group formed a creche which operated between two households after a time, with two different adults out of a total of eight men and women looking after four children a day: "depending on different people's jobs, commitment and preference". Wendy described their rota system with some amusement: "All the kids stayed at our house at some point. One night there'd be no kids and the next night two kids. We had these immense rotas. One time we had a six-colour coded rota as to where all the kids were. They didn't necessarily spend the night at the same place as they spent the day, so there was swapping around at 5.30. The first week I moved in was a nightmare. We had creche meetings once a fortnight, and there'd be all these adults sitting round talking about a kid shitting on the floor. There were these problems. All the nappies would end up in the same place, or all the trousers, and there were never enough to go round."

The meetings were necessary for the survival of the creche, because of the complexities of organisation, and to ensure a communal, concerned exchange of information about the children. "Childcare in general is not a boring thing, but the minute details of whether little Jane is eating an apple or not are very dull." The non-biological parents depended on the meetings for support. Their deep sense of responsibility for the children needed reassurance against cynical observations flung out by those who "feel they have an absolute right to barge in and criticise what you're doing. People would never behave so crassly and insensitively to parents in a family set-up, or to unsupported

mothers or to fostering/adopting parents. Because it's an unusual structure they think you're strange people who don't have feelings."

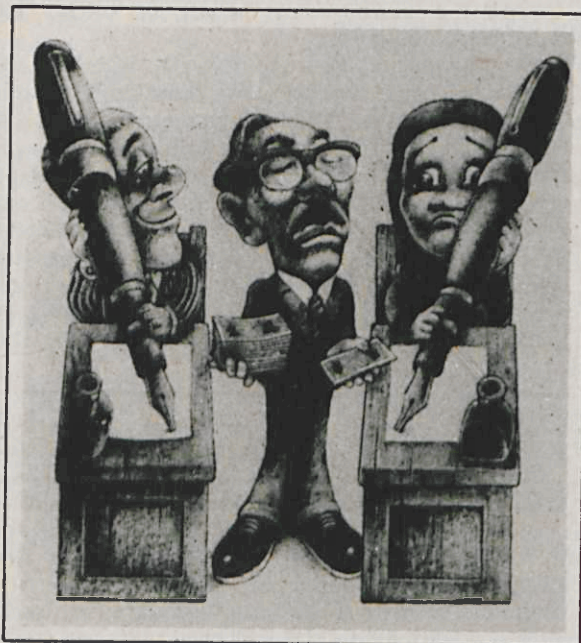
Obsolete parents?

Mothers who have had sole responsibility during their child's early years, who have gone through the frightening discovery that mothering is not all instinctive, feeling bewildered, unsure and insecure, feel also a sense of achievement. Their strength flows from their relationship with the children. When this particular relationship to their children changes and the constancy of their children's dependence begins to lose its hold, they can feel alone in a new anxiety. Their child's affection might disappear. This is an undertow of dread which is hard to reveal to the non-biological parents and which, in the delicacy of creating trust between parents and non-parents, can institute itself as defensiveness. At the creche meetings, Moira was always "reticent" about asking for special time with her child in her own house because her suggestion was interpreted as "possessiveness", an "incorrect" emotion, and met by a hurried reassurance that the other adults would be "nice" to her child. The issue of her identity as a mother was "swept under the carpet".

On the other hand, there is the question of mothers expecting the women to take responsibility while at the same time denying them real control. When this is raised, mothers can evade it by deflecting the question back on to their feelings. Fran gave an example from her household: "Like over teatime, I think if I'm cooking the tea, it ought to be up to me to decide whether or not the kids can have a sandwich beforehand, but when they go and ask their mother, she'll say yes or no regardless of me making the tea. And she just seems to get defensive when she's confronted about it, she just gets this guilty thing about 'I'm a bad mother'."

The extreme of forcing relationships to fit into a newly ordained order within the collective is, however, uselessly destructive. At one point in Fran and Jodie's household "We had agreed to abolish parenthood. James had been living with his mum for two years before that but if he called her mum someone would say

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'Her name is Rose'. Four years later Jodie comments wryly that they had "unrealistic expectations". The mother's practical experience of the child was rejected, and at times she had felt "put down just for being the mother." When the mother and child remained emotionally dependent on each other, some of the other adults had felt rejected. They reacted by rejecting the child themselves and almost blaming the mother for the situation.

Mother-right

Caroline's experience of collective living in London has led her to the conclusion that the mother is always a central figure in collective households and the childless women peripheral. "The exigency the kids had was absolute, the two mothers had a great deal of power in the collective. She felt this was because the intense emotion and physical effort of childcare—despite a fairly even distribution of work between the parents and non-parents—was out of balance when control stayed with the parents: "In all the collectives I've known the parents have had the ultimate responsibility or pleasure." Her response has been to have a child of her own because, finally, it seemed impossible to disentangle the love and labour: "Childcare is a very fine, exciting and volatile mixture of love and housework."

Her desire was echoed by some of the other women confronted by the ultimatum of mother right and the imminent departure of children from their lives. "From my experience mothers just want someone to help them out and they don't really want to give up control, and I feel now I would have to have kids myself to get that sort of relationship" was the despair and defeat felt by Jodie. Wendy and Alison thought that "parents can treat their kids like shit but they're still theirs". For Fran it was hard to live with the fear of loss: "Louise and the children are moving out to a co-op house, and this means that after several years I am not going to be living with them any more, and last week I started getting really upset because I thought that when Louise no longer needs me to help out I won't be seeing them any more."

The tired smile over the pushchair

In the public world the adults involved in collective childcare lack an acceptable identity. They are not bound to the children by ties of blood, nor by an institutionalised role as parent substitutes. They are not in either an extended family or a nuclear family. Some of the women felt deeply affected by "the strength of the ideology surrounding the mother role in our society". They often felt as if they were not "real women", merely "spinsters". When women travel into the outside world with children, there is the exchange of looks, the tired knowing smile over the pushchair, the inquiry from the shopkeeper, the nod over the bundle of parcels and baby on the bus, all of which assume the children are the woman's offspring. Alison and Jenny faced this constantly: "I used to do a big thing about how I wasn't the mother which I just can't be bothered with now." Jenny found herself fantasising that the children were hers. She wished the confusion did not creep in, wished she did not feel guilty when "sometimes I haven't bothered contradicting them" and wished she could wish it away altogether: "It's been very bad for me."

Relating to doctors, teachers etc, the problems are intensified, because here non-parents encounter "an inability to understand your involvement with 'someone else's children'." They represent an alternative way of life which threatens the property ethic. Jodie often felt "funny going to school because nearly everyone else is a mother or a childminder and I think teachers can't really figure it out. And I feel I am there under false pretences." Teachers could be hostile or indifferent to the non-parents. "At Parents' Evening the teacher looked at the mother but ignored me" and the non-parents were made forcibly aware of how their lives were in contrast, and of their powerlessness in "discussing children's welfare with outside bodies".

Back in the private sphere they found the opposite problem. In order to make clear their ongoing commitment to childcare, they strained to explain it: "I think I go on about kids too much, otherwise people think you are a free woman."

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Changing Childcare

Non-biological parents, especially women dependent on welfare, are more financially insecure than parents. Despite the cohabitation rule and other repressive aspects of welfare benefit for the unsupported mother, she has been provided with the (meagre) economic resources to bring up her children on her own. But the childless woman who decides not to take on full-time paid work in order to care for children cannot receive supplementary benefit for the children, her work in childcare is unrecognised by the state, and she is denounced for her choice to live on social security. "We're just seen as dole-scrungers" Alison and Wendy said. "It looks like scyving."

Jenny brought out the particular contrast between her job in a London council nursery and the oddity of being a non-biological parent in private life. "There I'm being paid as a nursery worker, the children go back to their parents in the evening and I don't feel all those responsibilities. It's a more clearly defined role as opposed to being this strange person who looks after other people's kids." For her the comparison is heightened when parents press for help with their children and overlook the love; "It's like saying children are just a burden. We wouldn't say that about a sexual relationship. We choose all the time to get dependent. There are a lot of good, positive things about being a parent that people deny. Parents get a lot of emotional reward from having a child. When I am with Andy I feel my life is far more structured and real in the same way you do when you have a sexual relationship."

Children as property

At a workshop on the Concept of Children as Property at the 1977 National Women's Liberation Conference, Jodie and Fran felt silenced when they wanted to discuss their predicament as non-biological parents: "There were lots of mothers there and some people were saying how awful it was that the women's movement had no commitment to childcare. Some women were saying why doesn't the women's movement get off its arse and help us with our kids. Fran and me just sat in the corner." Another woman, Sally, was angry at mothers who pose their problems with childcare in the form of a demand to be made on childless women: "I think men should pay attention to childcare but women should have the opportunity to divorce themselves from it if they want to." She thought the mothers were playing on guilt, and this produced ambivalence in some of the women who had made a conscious choice not to have children. Whereas illness interrupted Sally's pregnancies twice so her feelings were painful but clear; "The implication of those arguments is that nobody chooses to have kids" but there are "a lot of women who talk with great interest about kids. Others resent their kids and take their resentment out on other people."

The women who are non-biological parents feel like the governess of old—no-one knows quite how to treat them. In seeking deeper understanding and clarification of their position, they are asking for recognition of their feelings as well as of their contribution to the work involved in childcare: "We do not want to load even more criticism onto already pressured mothers. What we are saying is that it is also difficult for childless people in our society, and that unless we all try to work out these conflicts and recognise each other's difficulties, then successful collective childcare will never be a reality. The role of non-parents needs to be more clearly defined both within the collective and in the outside world, and our rights, needs and emotions must be recognised as valid."

The people I interviewed were Wendy Collins, Sarah Fildes, Alison Garthwaite, Jill Hughes, Sue Ismay, Gillian Lacey, Marina Lewycka, Richard Peters and Janet Seed. They read the articles and gave encouragement and criticism and I'd like to thank them for the time and care they gave. Alison, Wendy and I wrote a discussion document for Socialist Women's Action Group in Leeds, March '77, and Janet, Jill and Sue also wrote out their ideas together and I've quoted from both.



sent in by Paula Leech,
South Humberside.



Sent in by J. Williams, Aberdeen,
and Hugh Dowson, Bath.

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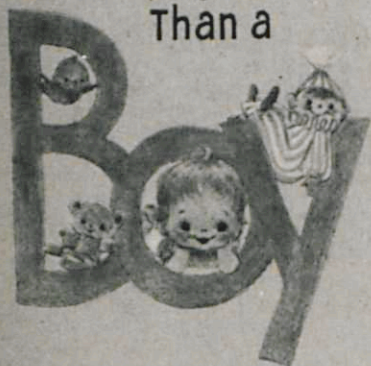
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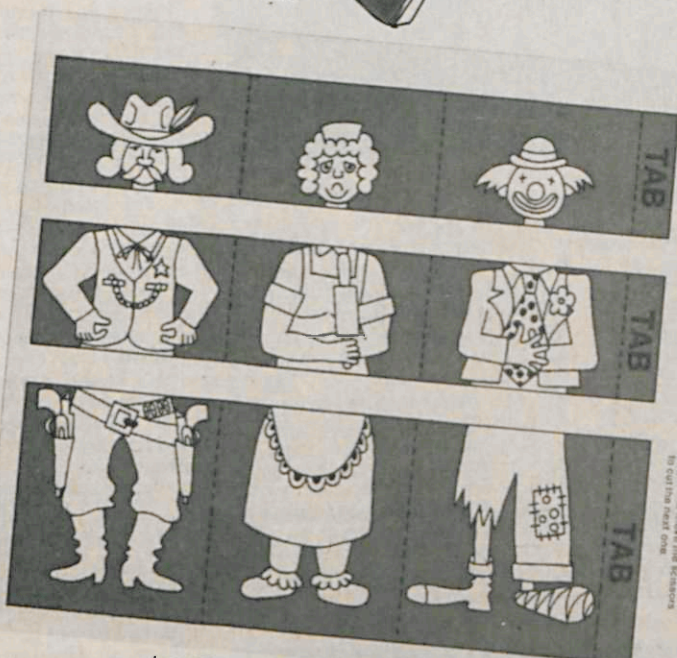
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WOMEN'S CENTRE

We went to the Yorkshire Regional Conference in July with ideas of opening a women's centre here. We listened somewhat gloomily to other people's experiences, so when we eventually started to rent 2 shopfront rooms we did so with some anxieties.

Well, we've survived our first 2 months! Perhaps one thing we have sorted out reasonably effectively is finance. About 40 people have bankers orders and this covers our rent and rates. We sell second-hand clothes, which brings in a nominal amount and every person who attends a group there contributes a small amount.

However, there hasn't been a burst of enthusiasm—things have been slow. There are still lots of questions like who is the centre for—the community? or is it a place where women in the movement can go to explore their ideas/feelings? We are starting to have open monthly meetings soon and hope to resolve in them who we want to attract to the centre. So far we have a playgroup that meets Fridays, and we are open Wednesday and Friday mornings when we sell clothes. We are hoping to organise women's rights and pregnancy testing sessions.

Ros

SHEFFIELD FILM CO-OP

"When we made 'A Woman Like You' none of us had ever touched film equipment," explained Jenny, "and as I was delegated to the role of camera operator, I borrowed the camera we would be using and took it home for the weekend just to practice assembling it—finding which leads plug in where, how to mount it on a tripod etc. The film was shot with hardly a single camera movement as at that time I didn't trust myself to be able to make smooth movements."

Jenny is one of the five women—3 with young children—in the Co-op which began in May 1975. Apart from making films that are relevant to the development of the Women's Liberation Movement and trying to spread the ideas to women generally, they also want to share their skills with other women. They say "it's important to demystify film-making. Blokes assume they're going to be in tune with the equipment quicker—they just launch in." They've also had to organise child care—"we're trying to hold out hope to other women with kids. We've had two babies born during the collective's exist-

ence."

So far they've made 3 films, including 'A Woman Like You' on wife battering. At the beginning of every project they work collectively on research, scripting, casting etc, then when shooting starts they have clearly defined roles. They've tried to strike a balance between rotating roles and giving each woman a chance to get to grips with what is involved in each aspect eg there are special skills to be learned in sound—laying sound tracks, mixing, dubbing. It's not possible for everyone to become an expert at everything in a relatively short period. The skills have to be learned properly, film making is costly and wasted film doesn't help their budget.

Recently they applied to the EOC for a £5,000 grant and got only £2500, but they're going ahead with their new film. A story aimed at teenagers about a girl who is leaving school and wants to be a motor mechanic. She manages to get an apprenticeship in a garage, but slowly her self-confidence is eroded by her friends, who make her worry about her own femininity.

WOMEN'S AID

The Women's Aid group here has been going for 3 years. We started off by squatting a house—it was open for a year before being repossessed by the council. The refuge we now have is rented privately, but soon we hope to move into a property that's been promised to us by the local authority. The Public Health Department has said that only 5 families can live in the refuge, though we're allowed to let women stay here for 2 nights and after that we have to contact other Yorkshire refuges that have space for them.

The number of women involved in the support group has fluctuated a lot—there're only about 6 who now come regularly to the meetings. Last year we had 5 workers paid for by Job Creation Programme and some people felt that Women's Aid was running okay, but now we are without paid workers and regular financial help and rely very much on support from the Women's Movement. The women in the refuge (most have been there for about 5 months) help to run the house, two of them have become involved with Women's Aid nationally and three came to the last conference. Some of the women have also started going to evening classes once a week in art.

The situation of battered women involves many of the questions the Women's Movement raises eg legal and financial independence, violence of men against women etc. If we don't identify with the WLM and vice versa we'll become indistinguishable from the Social Services or any charity organisation. We are very aware of such issues here and want more feminists to think about and possibly get involved in Women's Aid.

Sara

DISCOS

We realised it was ridiculous for different women's groups to compete on the disco market, so we started having joint monthly Women's Liberation discos, which not only raised money (split between NAC, Women's Aid, the Women's Centre) but also gave a public face to the WLM in Sheffield. Our experiences have forced us to think about some very important issues.

We used to hold our discos in a rather sleazy joint, with a resident sexist DJ and extortionate drink prices. We found that we didn't actually enjoy them much, though they made lots of money. So we changed to a big church hall in a largely West Indian area, ran our own disco, found a friendly band, hired a bar and tried again. Briefly, what happened was lots of black kids turned up (it was their youth club other nights), we didn't let them in because of the bar—they were pretty young—and because they wouldn't pay. There was a lot of tension and women on the door felt confused and unsupported (it didn't help being accused of being racist by an anti-fascist committee member); we finally let the kids in—some money got nicked, gay women got hassled. Next time round we couldn't get a bar; some of the kids came and it was much nicer—but we didn't make much money.

There were obvious conflicts. We need to raise money and so

SHEFFIELD CHILDBIRTH GROUP

The group started in Spring 1976, when Liz, Alice and Mavis were expecting babies, our main concern was to see that they had the pregnancy and delivery they wanted. During this time we wrote to the Sheffield Family Practitioner Committee (FPC), who were holding a meeting on home confinements. We said that it should be a woman's right to choose where she has her baby, assuming she has sufficient information to make the choice. The FPC, as a result, wrote to the local GPs saying that the patient's wishes should be 'respected', although the Area Health Authority's policy was towards 100% hospital confinement. GPs were asked to reply if they were willing to do home confinements—51 replied, but there's no public list, so we started compiling our own list of GPs and midwives.

We affiliated ourselves to the Society to Support Home Confinement and the Association for Improvement in Maternity Services. Next we did an article in the *Star* (a local paper) announcing our existence and informing Sheffield women as to what their options were. Since then a number of women have contacted us wanting home births. The Socialist Medical Association wrote to us offering support.

This summer Suzanne Arms and Don Creevey from USA talked on 'sensitivity in childbirth' at Jessop Hospital, many midwives attended and were sympathetic to our aims.

A couple of women have given us written accounts of their labour—this will start our 'case histories' file, which will provide invaluable hints for us all. We also have a good library of books on childbirth and pregnancy.

We recently heard that a Sheffield woman went to her GP asking to have her first baby at home and was told he wouldn't take responsibility for a home birth. The woman then rang the supervisor of midwives for her district and the latter immediately contacted the FPC. The FPC reprimanded the GP telling him that he was obstetrically qualified and thus obliged to take on the birth. So someone has the power to twist the doctor's arm.

From the SCG Newsletters (nos 1-3)

we need to have a bar—if we have one we can't have kids around, our own or anybody else's, if we change the place again we either lose control of the music and pay a lot for drinks or we attract the same old crowd of assorted lefties in a student hall.

For the present we've decided to have alternate money-making mixed discos (somewhere) and socials for women and kids only (in the women's centre). As feminists I think the way we raise money is as important as the raising of it, we should try to find new ways and open the WLM here out a bit to people who don't know anything about it—we could make our own music, have a festival... I suppose it takes time, meanwhile we'll keep on boppin'.

Celia



Leeds—dancing round the statues in the square

PAULINE HUERRE

We will walk without fear

NOVEMBER 12th:

Leeds

"I never dared go out alone after dark. When I saw the leaflet about the night demo I knew I had to go but I was so scared. I was even sick before going out but I did and it really changed how I felt. I'm not alone. I know that now. It's wonderful."

Women unite, reclaim the night! 130 Leeds women congregating in City Square, torchlit figures shouting in the windy darkness, and suddenly we're in a big circle holding hands. Voices hoarse from singing rise again in memory of the walk down to town from Woodhouse, where rapists lurk on

the moor, or Chapeltown, Ripper '77 territory. Strong knowing our sisters all over Britain are marching tonight too.

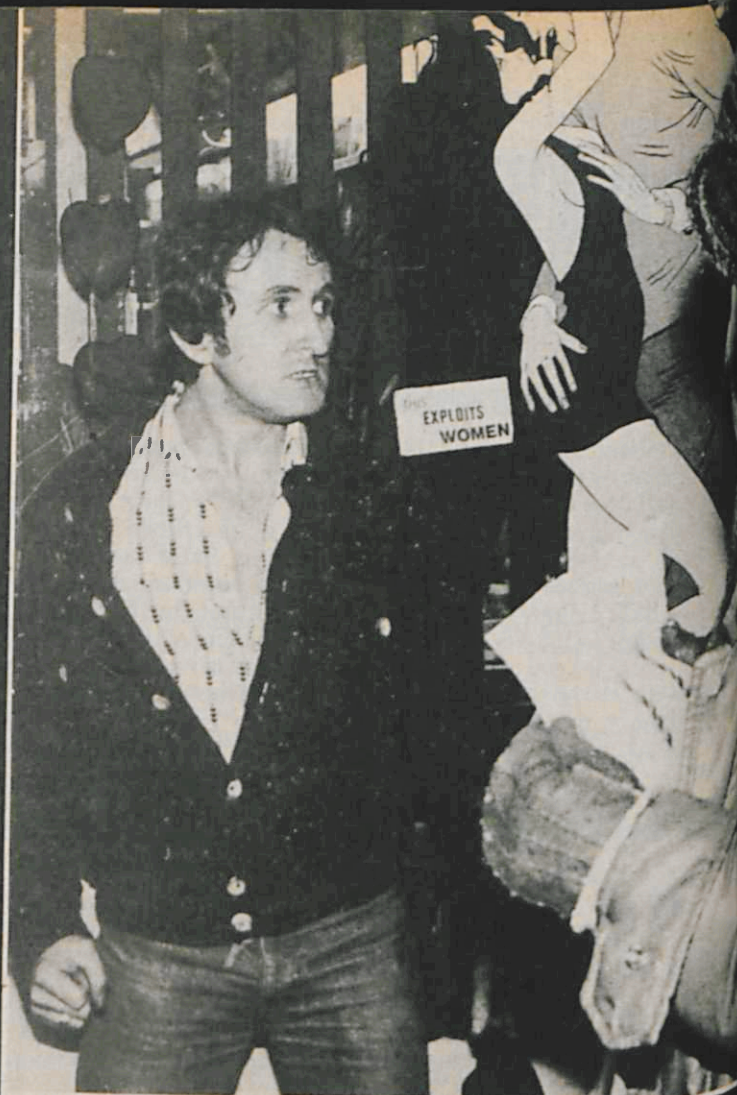
City Square is a wild spontaneous women's takeover, singing, dancing, a speech—"We've got this space but it's not enough. What are we going to do to take more?"

Reclaim the Night group

Manchester

Over the Pennines about 400 women had turned out, marching in from their local areas. "We wanted to show that it's not just the city centre where women are attacked, it's in the local streets that you live on," said Lesley Merryfinch.

The planning group in



London—pornbrokers on the defensive

London

This is the best high-flying demo I've EVER been on! Hundreds of women wailing and dancing through the streets of Soho. "Sexist crap, sexist crap, SEXIST CRAP!" startling bystanders.

The manager of The Pussy Parlour tight-jawed, face flesh quivering as he scrapes stickers off his windows. "What does this mean?" he hisses at me as I take his picture. "Can't you read?" I say. THIS DEGRADES WOMEN, THIS EXPLOITS WOMEN.

One woman is running ahead squirting windows with water, followed by others slapping stickers on with such exuberant violence you think the windows must break, and hope they will.

A man steps out of fluorescent-lit doorway and gets his chest squirted then slapped with a sticker.

Not like any other march. No stewards, cowed by police, cajoling people to keep the ranks. No. We are all over. Humming, buzzing, shouting. A real woman's march—a rampage. Surging, droning, chanting. Women Fight Rape.

Yes means yes
No means no
However we dress
Wherever we go.

Flame-lit faces of people who have found the spirit to fight a mammoth war. One woman stops another to get a light for her torch. A young black man comes over, blows out the torch and turns to run off to his smirking mates.

Manchester decided not to contact the police beforehand. In their leaflet they said, "The police attitude is 'Stay at home' which means we're imprisoned in our homes to avoid attacks, while the men who might attack us can walk around freely. We want to say we've had enough of male violence and male justifications for it. We're walking together tonight in the streets because we've got a right to be here. It's men's violence that's got to stop. We agree that men's attitudes won't change overnight, but at least we're showing that we're no longer content to accept this situation and we're angry about it."

On the night the police turned up at the meeting points, but after some discussion agreed to put policewomen on the escort. "They did show some tact," said Lesley.

We met in Piccadilly Gardens and stood under the statue of Queen Victoria, some women speaking out about why we were marching: "People try to pin attacks on sex fiends. But it's not just that, it's the ordinary man in the street."

It was the night before Armistice Sunday. We stood in silence for two minutes in remembrance of all women who've suffered at the hands of men, then went on our way to the new women's centre singing "The Women's Army is marching, O, Sisters, don't you weep."

Marion Bowman



PAULINE HUERRE

Leeds—on the march

Lancaster

We met in the Women's Centre and left in procession, 27 of us, at 11pm. We started out slightly hysterical, giggling our way along but we calmed down fast enough when we started getting abuse from men.

The centre of Lancaster seemed to be crawling with police... It was very noticeable that in the areas immediately outside the centre, in the places where women are most likely to have trouble, there were no police present at all.

The best thing was the constant warmth and support we got from other women. There was no arguing about us being "extreme" or "crazy" or "anti-men". They knew exactly what we were shouting about and shouted their support back. These contacts made all the wind and the wet worth it.

from Lancaster WL newsletter

Brighton

Women walked all over the town, giving out leaflets, banging saucepan lids, blowing whistles and singing. Many wore white makeup or had women's signs painted on their cheeks.

Bristol

The police were very unwilling to let the women march through the city-centre, so there was a silent torch-lit procession through dark residential areas, where there have been several sexual assaults. "It was too cold to wear anything fancy! But we had lots of placards, and the Bristol Women's Liberation Group banner in front."

Whatever politicking went on to do with the organisation of it (and I wasn't in on it) it was a blow-out to be there. It was wild. There. There, where normally we walk silently, stewing inside, keeping our disgust to ourselves. It was exhilarating just to MOVE, express our feelings, instead of the eyes-down-look-like-you're-going-somewhere walk, the woman alone walk. We ran and jumped, and argued and stretched ourselves.

At the end we meet in Leicester Square. And all the piggy men. I sense a sporting violence from them.

"Wot you doin' 'ere? You ain't even ugly." (This man got bopped in the face.)

"I should come here to pick up my chicks." (A denim-clad slickster.) Horrible, slimy men.

May the day come when sex shop owners and strip club owners can't buy insurance, are afraid to do business for fear of their plate glass being smashed, for fear of their plushy interiors being messed up, for fear of their own crummy lives. I saw fear in the eyes of those traffickers. They are afraid of our rage. They should be.

Pat Moan



ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

York

About 80 women sang and danced round York, and had a party afterwards. "It was amazing to be able to walk through the streets singing at the top of your voice, but we needed more songs to sing!"

Newcastle

A hundred women turned up equipped with home-made torches, and the demonstration ended with an impromptu party and meeting.

How did it all start?

Leeds women formed a Reclaim the Night Group after reading the report of the night demos in Germany (SR 61) and discussing action against male violence at the "Revolutionary Feminist" conference in Edinburgh in July. "We were particularly concerned because there'd been a series of women murdered in West Yorkshire," they explained. "There'd

been a need for a new area of action radical enough to really fire people."

They decided to fix a date for a march which they published in WIRES, the National Women's Liberation Newsletter. They also sent letters to women's centres and publications calling for support. The idea caught on.

Locally they distributed 1700 leaflets in offices, factories, hospitals, shopping centres and pubs. "Just doing that was in itself consciousness raising," said Magda Yates. They co-ordinated national publicity, spending a lot of time and money contacting the national press (who gave some coverage) and the BBC (who weren't interested). They did manage to get on local radio to explain what they were doing.

In future Leeds plan more agitational action and a rape crisis group. They had a lot of expenses over the demo and hope to recoup the cost by selling badges (below) at 20p each plus sae from Chris Joyce, c/o Corner Bookshop, 162 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2.

London
-plastering
the windows



ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

★ ★ ★
RECLAIMING-THE NIGHT
We are walking for
all women —
all women should be
free to walk down
any street night or
day without fear
WOMEN JOIN US!

ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

She belts him over the back with it and it re-ignites, burning a hole in his jacket. Women's laughter in the torchlight. Men looking at the jacket under the streetlight.

It is a measure of how confident men feel of their unconditional right to abuse women that so many of them step into our group and smugly insult individual women. Sometimes other women rally round in defence and the men wander off.

One delightful woman has a bag of maggots for sprinkling on the offending males.

It is so fluid this "march"—very fast at times, running around, at, over cars, stopping traffic. I think police are not used to running. They come along behind ripping down stickers, muttering comfortably into radios—little gestures, by stiff spectators.

Around the event, before and after, there are objections: that it should have been held locally, not in Soho; that it might be confused with a Mary Whitehouse-type campaign; an ex-prostitute told me she didn't agree with it because she thought it would be bad for the business of the prostitutes in Soho. I'm sure there were more that I didn't hear. But this event isn't the be-all and the end-all, the definitive perfect demonstration. It should be a starting point, an inspiration, a learning experience, a step forward. It does not preclude other actions. Women's liberation is about supporting other women. Let's do it.

INFORMATION TO
ANNY BRACKX
27 CHERRENWELL CLOSE
LONDON EC1

SHORTLIST

TALKS & CONFERENCES

Images of Women & The Media
14 December. 8.00 at 18 Moffat Rd, London SW17. Speaker Jo Spence (Hackney Flasher). Also slideshow and discussion. Organised by Balham and Tooting Women's Group CPGB.

Scottish Women's Liberation Conference
17/18 December. At the Students Union, Monkert St, St Andrews, Fife. Theme: what are the best strategies for a feminist revolution, with particular reference to lesbian separatism, socialist feminism, violence. Creche, lunches, tea, coffee, accommodation (bring sleeping bag) provided. Details from the WL Conference Planning Group, 4 Fleming Place, St Andrews, Fife.

Socialist Feminist Theory
20 December. 8.00 discussion organised by the Manchester and District Women & Socialism Group, at the Big Flame Office, 14A Piccadilly, Manchester.

Socialist Feminist Practice
3 January. 8.00 discussion organised by the Manchester & District Women & Socialism Group, at the Big Flame Office, as above or in the new Women's Centre, Nelson St.

Hackney/Islington Socialist Feminists
5 and 9 January. A Thursday and a Monday group meet in the evenings at the Factory, Matthias Rd, London N16. Discussions on women and the welfare state, fascism and racism, patriarchy. Details from Harriet Tod, 38 St Philips Rd, London E8 (01-254 3294).

The Garment Trade
8 January. 3.00 at the National Museum of Labour History, Limehouse Town Hall, Commercial Rd, London E14. Speaker Edith Sutton (ex national officer TGWU)

International Women's Day
8 January. 2.00 planning meeting at Deptford Women's Centre, 74 Deptford High St, London

Women in Eastern Europe
13 January. 7.30 Newsletter editorial discussion. Meet outside the London School of Economics Library, Houghton St, London WC2.

Welsh Women's Liberation Conference
14/15 January. At Splott Youth Centre, Cardiff. Creche. Contact 182 Broadway, Adamsdown, Cardiff (0222 499759) if you want accommodation.

Women & Custody
21 January. 10.00-8.30 workshop organised by Rights of Women, at the Architectural Association, 34 Bedford Sq, London WC1. "A workshop for women to discuss the law relating to custody & access, the sexist assumptions underlying custody decisions, lesbian custody, and how we can fight the law." Inform ROW, 2 St Paul's Rd, London N1, if you're coming and if you're bringing children. Adm free.

CAMPAIGNS

Abortion

Abortion & Women's Liberation
17 December. 2.00-6.00 meeting at St Matthews Hall, opposite Brixton Town Hall, London SW9. Women new to the campaign especially welcome. Creche. Details from 01-274 8256.

Benyon Bill Protest Arrests
Six women were arrested on 14 July, outside Parliament, for pro-

testing against Benyon's anti-abortion bill, and charged with obstruction and one with assault. One of the women will be tried on 28 December, 10am at Bow St Magistrates Ct, and the other five on 24 January at 10am. Show your support inside and outside the court. Details from Avril (01-328 0391).

An Alternative to Life

"The National Abortion Campaign in Cleveland is trying to set up a counselling service as an alternative to Life. We are thinking about counselling training, information, premises, publicity, and would welcome shared experiences, pitfalls and successes." Contact Lynne, 118 Oxford Rd, Middlesbrough, Cleveland.

Rape

"We were overwhelmed by the response to our Reclaim the Night demonstration (see pp 22/23) ... Various ideas were put forward to build on the energy the demonstration had brought out." One group, interested in education, plan to go into schools to talk to girls about how rape relates to society, and what to do about it. They hope to get a video tape or film together as part of a transportable kit. They want comments, suggestions, experiences, ideas for getting funds. Contact the Newcastle Women's Group, Women's Centre, 233 Jesmond Rd, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne.

National Organisation of Lesbians
NOOL was set up as an autonomous organisation, without hierarchical organisation, which aims "to break down the isolation of women approaching lesbianism, but also to go out and smash the negative image of lesbians, through political action." A telephone tree for quick mobilisation on national issues is being set up, and a newsletter with reports on the conference, a contact list, and papers for the next conference on structure (2nd February, York), will appear in January. Anyone interested in working on lesbian custody cases, sex education in schools, lesbians in the armed forces, lesbianism & psychiatry, discrimination at work, contact the Newsletter Cttee, c/o Sue Allen, 38 The Chase, London SW4. Anyone wanting to help organise the York conference contact NOOL c/o York Women's Centre, 32A Parliament St, York.

Why Be A Wife Bop
7 January. Details of time and place from 01-720 9403.

Why Be A Wife?

8 January. 11.00 onward meeting at the Camden Women's Centre, Rosslyn Lodge, Lyndhurst Rd, London NW3. "The idea is to raise questions about marriage, because marriage is the pivot by which the social, legal and economic position of both married and single women is defined." Details from YBAWife, 214 Stapleton Hall Rd, London N4.

FILMS

Take it like a Man, Ma'am
5-31 January. At the Other Cinema, Tottenham St, London W1. Shown with some other films and followed by a discussion, *Take it like a Man, Ma'am* is a colour feature film by a Danish women's collective "about a housewife, who wants to go out to work, and the issues around the two areas (home and outside work) of women's lives. Contains a role-reversal sequence with a male stripper." Details from 01-637 9308/9.

Women's Cinema
3.00 at The Other Cinema, as above.

8 January. *Adam's Rib* (1949) with Katherine Hepburn. Also shorts.

22 January. *All about Eve* (1950) with Bette Davis. Also shorts. Membership £1.00; entrance 60p. Women only.

A Film, is Film, is Films ...
"This is to all women who have made/are making films that you've

PUBLICATIONS

FBI vs Women

This pamphlet examines and provides documentation on the intensive FBI surveillance of the US women's movement since the late 60s. In February this year 1377 pages of FBI files on women's liberation were released in response to a Freedom of Information Act request lodged by the Socialist Workers Party. Suspicions about police infiltration can become the scourge of the left, sowing confusion and distrust, but the documented evidence of it is a vital weapon. It is also extremely educative to see ourselves as the other side see us—and who could be more Other than the political police of the US government?

In '69 the San Francisco FBI were advising J Edgar Hoover that within the New Left, women's liberation was 'consuming more and more organisational time, and discussion on the premises of this movement are psychical and introspective'. They went on: 'It could well be recommended as a counter-intelligence movement to weaken the revolutionary movement.' Hoover, however, was not convinced, and asked agents to 'establish subversive ramification of women's liberation' with particular reference to links with SDS, the Black Panther Party, the Puerto Rican movement, and the Socialist Workers' Party. Very quickly the women's movement was targeted for long term disruption. Protest actions, mass demos, campaigns organising groups such as the

never thought of showing/you've never been able to show/that you've shown to a few friends... We need a festival, a space to see what women are doing with film... I am a feminist into film, have started sussing out forming a collective and getting a festival together." Info, ideas, questions, details of films to Penny Holland, c/o 42 Kynaston Rd, London N16.

FUN & MUSIC

Søsterrock

19 December. 8.00-12.00 women's bop at the Waterloo Action Centre, Baylis Rd, London SE1 (Waterloo, Lambeth N tubes). With Søsterrock, a Danish women's rock band (good to dance to). Adm £1 (75p claimants). Proceeds to cover the band's fares.

Women Only Bar

Sunday nights. 7.30-10.30 at the Cellar Bar, Shakespeare Pub, 93 Buckingham Palace Rd, opp Victoria Station. London SW1. Food—no price increase—a place to meet, talk, listen to music and feel unhassled.

Women's Abortion Action Coalition, women's centres and conferences were infiltrated and monitored by field agents, who noted frictions between gay and heterosexual women, or between women and various 'leaders' or between various tendencies such as (roughly speaking) socialist feminist and radical feminist. Disruption included exploiting these areas of debate to form splits whenever possible. (Very much the same tactics employed in earlier counter-intelligence programmes against the Black movement.)

The National Organisation of Women (NOW) is currently seeking legal access to its FBI files, so this pamphlet is probably only the first wave in a tide of revelations about the force of the opposition facing the US women's movement. Available at 40p + postage from Compendium Bookshop, 234 Camden High St, London NW1.

Alison Fell

Black Skins in White Schools

Until recently there has been very little authentic documentation of black children's experiences in schools—that is material which doesn't describe them as deprived and deficient. **Libertarian Education's* current issue has two good articles on the subject: Black Skins in White Schools, and Indian Girls. The latter is a transcript of Indian girls discussing the cultural and racial prejudices to which they are subjected. The Commonplace Workshop, 28 Dorset Rd, London SW5, produces, stocks, and sells various pamphlets and books by and about West Indian girls, and material of similar relevance is available at the English Centre, Ebury Teachers' Centre, Sutherland St, London SW1.

From Women's Report



1978

Women's Report Wall Calendar

Cartoons from past issues, *Women's Report* copy deadlines, diary space. It's black and white and comes in two parts of six months. 25p + 10p postage or 5 for £1 + 10p; more than 10 copies post free. From 14 Aberdeen Rd, Harrow, Middx.

Women's Aid

Black and white with drawings and cartoons 1' x 1'3" calendar (40p), and four Christmas cards

Libertarian Education No 23 is available at 30p + 10p postage from 6 Beaconsfield Rd, Leicester.

Susan Hemmings

* Gay Left and *Outcome

"Over the past few years there has been little theoretical discussion within the Gay Movement". *Gay Left No 5* (40p) attempts to remedy this failure, also to go beyond an economic analysis of gay oppression. Subjects covered include Gays and Fascism, a readable introduction to Althusser, Mitchell and Lacan. Half the issue is devoted to reviews of literature, film and theatre dealing with sexuality. It's still an all male editorial collective, and the contents reflect this.

In contrast *Outcome No 5* (20p) places greater emphasis on practical politics and "aims to reflect... the impact of the Women's Liberation Movement on the Gay Liberation Movement". Now attempting national coverage: news in this issue from Belfast, Aberdeen, Lancaster and Nottingham. The difficult subject of paedophilia is discussed, and there's also poetry, personal reflections on coming out at work and... on a Greyhound Bus!

Sara Rance

Latin American Perspectives—Women and Class Struggle

The essays in this issue examine the relationship of women's oppression to class exploitation and the roots of this oppression within monopoly capitalism.

In her essays on race and class in colonial Peru, Elinor Burkett accuses feminist academics of not really confronting the differences between women such as "Mrs Marcos and a female serf on her husband's plantation", she says "while we theorise

('wife' if found return to husband, peace on earth to all women, when diamonds don't work out for ever—Refuges are a girl's best friend, battered women need refuges every day including birthdays. 5p each). Reductions on bulk orders. From NWAFF, 51 Chalcot Rd, London NW1 (01-586 0104).

Why Be A Wife

Christmas cards 'Who's cooking your goose this Xmas?'. 6p each or 5 for 20p + 12p postage from YBAWife, as above.

This exploits women

Start 1978 by showing your disgust at sexist advertising. 'This

endlessly about the oppression of women, we all too frequently forget that the position of one is maintained only through the exploitation of the other and such a relationship leaves little concrete room for sisterhood."

There are particularly interesting essays on women workers in Argentina and on Guatemalan women's participation in the labour movement. The papers are written mostly in a very academic/sociological style i.e. packaging simple and useful ideas in an intricate network of mystifying sentences.

Latin American Perspectives, Vol IV, Nos 12/13, Women and Class Struggle, available at \$5 + postage from LAP, c/o CMS, PO Box 792 Riverside, Calif, 92502, US.

Barbara Charles

* The Main Enemy

Great Stuff. Radical feminists haven't always shown a good grasp of the material conditions of women's lives, but Delphy grounds her argument for women's distinct class positions firmly in her research into women's work. There's also the best debate I've seen between the revolutionary-feminist and left-feminist positions, and an acute critique of the 'what we women need to change is values/ideology/the unconscious' lines. Shows finally that radical feminism doesn't have to mean biologism—or mysticism—or separatism—that it's provided some central understandings for our whole movement.

Written by Christine Delphy and published by the WRRCP, it's available at 80p + postage from the WRRCP, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

Amanda Sebestyen

exploits women' stickers are available at 15p for 10 + 10p postage from Affirm c/o A Woman's Place, 42 Earlham St, London WC2.

Kathe Kollwitz Calendar

Yellow and green, 15½" x 11½" with seven Kollwitz prints. Available at 90p incl. from S Molloy c/o Women's Group, Workers Resource Centre, 52 Broadway, Belfast BT12, N Ireland.

Women's Voice Calendar

Two colour, folded so you can either display two months at a time or stretch it out to its full length. 75p each (£1 for 2) from *Women's Voice*, SWP, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2.

* Fireweed—Women's Issue

The Women's Issue of *Fireweed* is now out, containing a wide range of socialist material by and about women. There's work from different countries and political eras, from a story about women in mental hospitals by Canadian writer Margaret Gibson Gilboord to an excerpt from Brecht's *The Mother* in a new translation. There's a reserved but moving story by Anna Seghers which follows the journeyings of a German mother in search of her revolutionary son in the refugee years of 1937-41. And there's contemporary British work. I liked the section of a first novel by ex-mill worker Margaret Parkinson, about a Northern working class girl coming to adolescence, but there are also some good sharp anti-sexist songs by Leon Rosselson and stories of post-women's liberation life, love and fantasy by Zoe Fairbairns and Sara Maitland. And poems, photographs too.

Fireweed No 10 is available at 75p postage from 99 Dale St, Lancaster.

Alison Fell

Women's Centres Conference

The papers from the York conference (12/13 November) will be printed in *Wires* and will also be available from York Women's Centre, 32A Parliament St, York. They cannot send them to centres as planned, due to not covering conference costs. Contributions to the York Women's Centre Collective.

Wires

Wires, the national women's liberation newsletter will be produced by a new collective at York Women's Centre, from January.

* Indicates publications are available from the Publication Distribution Co-op, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

*The rule is, Jam tomorrow
and Jam yesterday—
but never Jam today.*

From Through the Looking Glass



Jam Today

a feminist band, have been playing together for two years. They've now reached a turning point with four of their members about to leave. *Barbara Charles* talked to them about how they've developed and what problems they've faced.

Barbara: How did you get together originally?

Frankie: First Alison and Terry answered my ad in the London Women's Liberation newsletter in February '76. Alison said she wouldn't have responded if I'd said 'women wanted to form band', I just said 'women to make music with'.

Alison: I hadn't played my guitar for six years—I ended up learning the bass as we needed one.

Terry: Then it all snowballed from there with Angele, Corine, Josie and Deirdre joining us. We started playing loosely together and after a while feminism and the political potential of a band became more appealing.

Barbara: How did that potential develop?

Terry: We went through stages, we were all different musically and politically, but wanted to make music with women. We were an open group but had to become more closed as it became obvious some had more commitment than others. We came to realise we had to choose—and be chosen by—people we'd get on with musically and politically.

Deirdre: We did have a full band without being selective. It's just that when we didn't have a singer we thought why not get a good one.

Frankie: We felt strange about that and talked a hell of a lot about it—the whole thing about standards and on what basis

do we choose. There was a good singer who disagreed with us over abortion, so we couldn't work together.

Terry: At that point none of us had discussed abortion but had taken it that we all agreed with it.

Alison: We realised we had political as well as musical criteria.

Barbara: What were the musical criteria?

Terry: It's to do with different attitudes to music—some of us wanted to go over things getting them right and were committed to regular practices.

Deirdre: We mustn't be apologetic about the fact that we feel women casually jamming together isn't always enough for some.

Angele: If we did what people wanted it would be boring for us. We're just as involved in the musical side as the political—the music's got to be challenging for us as well.

Frankie: We have been criticised for being too professional . . .

Alison: Yes, it's absurd when women are taking something seriously. This criticism is directed at the arts more than mechanical things. Why are all male professional standards supposed to be completely thrown out for music yet not for, say, plumbing?

Frankie: It's really to do with questioning male commercial standards.

Barbara: Did you talk a lot about your musical and political differences?

Terry: We didn't make a conscious decision to have all the discussions we do. It started because we all liked each other, at first what would happen was that people





*I don't want no reassurances of Jam tomorrow,
There was no Jam yesterday and too much sorrow.
In this wonderland of dreams never coming true,
Women are wanting freedom now,
What can we do?
Be it housing, be it love, music, equal pay—
No more false promises: Jam Today!*

Jam Today's lyrics

didn't want to leave after practices, we'd go into the kitchen and talk, then the talking became more structured and instead of having conversations we ended up having meetings.

Frankie: Finally we had a meeting once a week because we were spending so much practice time discussing.

Barbara: What issues did you make decisions about and did you all end up agreeing over them?

Deirdre: The politics of the band have always been the result of the attitude of everyone in it. We've had to compromise to work together, but also we've all changed.

Terry: Initially there was a lot of conflict about whether to do mixed gigs (for both men and women), but we felt by doing them we'd make more impact and reach more women, who didn't already know about the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM).

Deirdre: We really needed to branch out more, not remain in a close knit community.

Frankie: My attitude to women's culture has changed—while it's an important development it has to spread. I began to feel urgent about going outwards and playing for women everywhere, who might not otherwise see non-sexist, non-commercial women musicians. I started off reluctant to play mixed gigs because I only wanted to play for women—that hasn't changed—but it became obvious there was no other way to play to as many women as possible.

Barbara: What have your experiences been like at mixed gigs?

Angele: There's a lot more tension. A lot of the men feel threatened by their 'girlfriends' liking us. The women would come to the front and listen and tell their 'boyfriends'... well, not to claim them for a certain time.

Frankie: There've been great atmospheres at women only events, but some of our most valuable times have been at mixed gigs—there's been hostility and we've had to be strong together. There's been confrontation and violence, which isn't enjoyable but real because antagonisms have been exposed.

Barbara: What has wanting to play to a wide range of women meant in terms of your music?

Alison: Though we discussed playing to many women, like in prisons, borstals, youth clubs etc, it did become clear that the music we were playing limited our audience—it wouldn't appeal to all women. It wasn't possible to reach that huge vast range of women who don't share the same musical taste.

Frankie: But we've still widened our audience. We did a girls' youth club bop, that was a very positive experience—having a workshop with the girls where they had a go at all the instruments. We've also done several Women's Aid benefits.

Barbara: You've played a lot for women within the WLM, has that affected the kind of music you've done?

Deirdre: Our most supportive audiences are from the WLM, and they like dancing and want dance music.

Terry: We should explain that our dance music so far has involved a wide variety of music—rock, reggae, blues and funk, and some slightly jazzy material. But we've been labelled a rock band.

Deirdre: With most groups their audiences go to see them for their music, but a lot of our audiences come because of our politics and who we are—women. If we develop our music, supposing it became more jazzy, would some women stop coming because they didn't enjoy it so much?

Terry: That could sound patronising. Music is another area which involves learning and development, from which women have been actively discouraged. Also there's another point—in a heterosexual environment women are very conscious of the way people expect them to be, in a women only situation they can let themselves go more and that's why they like to dance.

Alison: Also people might listen to us more than we think.

Diana: At the Women's Aid party a lot of the women did sit and listen—we were playing dance music to a listening audience.

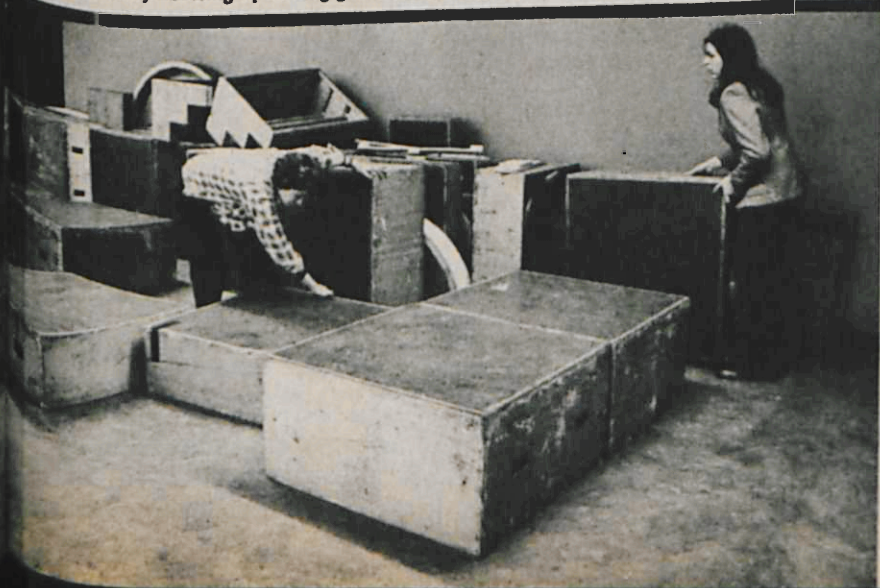
Fran: And at a Women's Aid benefit one of the women asked Diana if she'd sing the words to one of the songs on her own, 'cos she couldn't hear them.

Diana: That used to be a problem, but now we've been criticised for alienating the audience with our new PA system, which is ridiculous as it's there to enable us to communicate more clearly with them. Women have to work with technology in the field of music. Our means of existing as a rock band depends on resources that've been invented by men.

Frankie: And it's provided a context for Sarah to be a sound engineer in a



Jam Today—setting up for a gig and Sarah (top right) mixing



women's band. Some criticisms have been valuable but ultimately we've had to make our own decisions. Some people didn't like hearing the same things and others have said 'oh what's all this new stuff, play something we know'.

Deirdre: If there'd been more bands we could have shared more and done more new things. It's important to get more women playing.

Angele: That would ease the pressure on us—then we wouldn't be considered as the main feminist dance band.

Terry: That's not so easy—how can older women, for example, in an ageist society just start playing music?

Frankie: We can only be part of the process of more women growing dissatisfied with what they're supposed to be.

Terry: Anyway there were disagreements within the band, some members didn't want to work on lots of new material.

Frankie: There were other reasons—we just didn't have the time, there were always arrangements to make and practices for gigs.

Barbara: Has that been a problem . . . ?

Frankie: People seeing us playing see the tip of an iceberg. The administration—organising gigs, constantly ringing round, getting equipment mended, the van mended and never having enough money to do things easily, takes up a lot of energy. It's difficult to share things out equally among ourselves—we've had lots of rotas and rows.

Barbara: What's your financial situation been like?

Terry: Because we had to practice so much, we had to support ourselves, people gave up jobs. We've all paid to be in the band.

Alison: Very little income we get goes to us as individuals. For example if we get say £75 for a mixed gig, £10 is for expenses getting there, £10 for van insurance and about £5 for each of us—there are nine in the band. But this is misleading because now we are probably going to pay £500 to repair the van and we owe £1000 on the new PA so we can't take any money for ourselves. What we used to take didn't even cover expenses of getting to practices three times a week.

Frankie: There's the whole discussion that if women are paid that creates an elitist division between performers/non-performers. But the ideology of a situation can completely ignore our financial reality.

Terry: Sometimes we've had to argue with women about being paid.

Frankie: The idea is women should bring whatever they have to contribute to an event—with some people it's dancing and with others it's five hours work.

Barbara: What has your role in the band been, Fran?

Fran: I got involved through Alison—she's my sister. I helped with the equipment and operated the old PA amplifier at the first gigs, my role has gradually extended. But before we got the new PA I felt the band could manage without me, I didn't feel equal to the others who were musicians. Since the new PA my role's become more important—I've learnt a lot about electronics generally. I feel people don't realise what I do, because most of my work is done before and after the gig or in between. I set up the PA with Sarah and check all the equipment. It's important that I'm there during the playing in case there's an emergency like Frankie's drum pedal

falling off or a lead needing soldering.

Barbara: Sarah, how did you come to join the band?

Sarah: After two years as Henry Cow's sound engineer, where I learnt a lot but had always been at a disadvantage as a woman, the next logical step I thought naively, was to become a recording engineer. It soon became clear nobody was going to give me a chance. I approached all the big commercial studios and ended up in a back room at Pye Studios copying tapes of Max Bygraves. I left to work at Tom Newman's studio where he taught me for two years. I met Jam Today through the WL Music Project, we talked about an album and began recording at Tom's studio—my first independent project. My relationships with some of the men I had to work with reached breaking point, largely due to this. I was doing something alone and was happier and confident this way. I left and joined the band when they got the new PA and mixer.

Barbara: How have you changed, Deirdre, since joining the band—you'd played in commercial bands before?

Deirdre: When I first joined I'd never come into contact with feminism, only with how the press portrayed it. When you play with men it's everyone for themselves, there's a lot of competition and that rubbed off on me, in the sense that I looked out for myself and didn't rely on others in the band. With Jam Today what really impressed me and made me stay was how people were really concerned about each other and were interested in what you wanted to do. It was because of that that I started becoming interested in what

feminism was really about.

Barbara: Could you tell me more about the policies you've had?

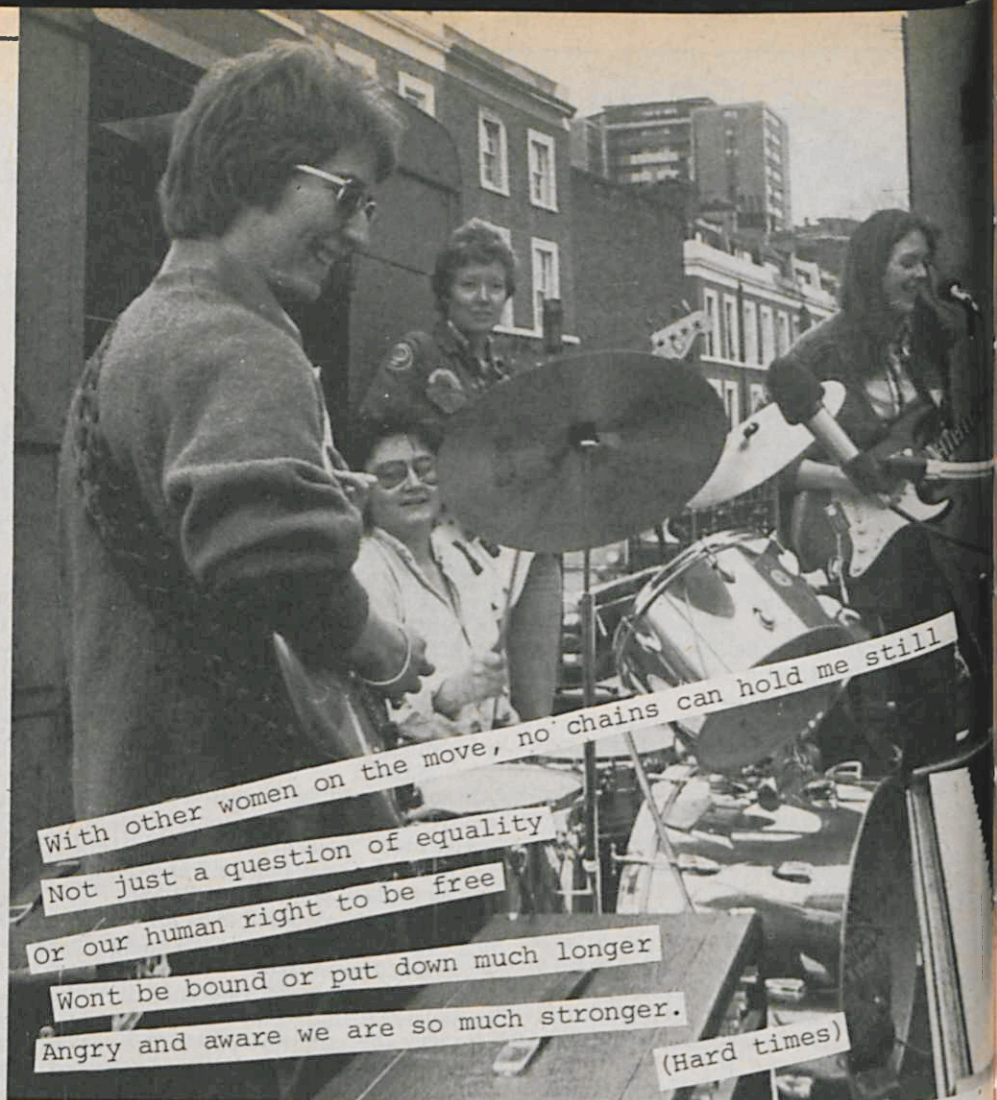
Alison: We don't encourage men to come onto the stage because if they talked to us about the equipment it might discourage women who don't have the confidence to say something like 'I'd love to learn the drums, how can I go about it?' They'd think it was trivial after overhearing a man say 'How did you make that sound, with a blah, blah . . . ?'

Deirdre: Another principle was that no men should handle the equipment, it was important to show that we not only played the instruments but loaded the van, took care of the equipment and so on.

Terry: I've noticed a difference now in the attitude of the men who do come up, it's not 'do you want any help girls?', they know we can do it, they don't believe we need them anymore.

Barbara: What dissatisfactions have you felt within the band?

Diana: In some ways I've really progressed with the band, especially with the music we've done recently. I was previously working with another band, which caused problems, I felt I was splitting my life in two—I couldn't devote enough time to Jam Today to feel I was part of it. Another thing is that it's difficult working collectively and successfully, it depends on the balance of personalities in the group and when the balance is tipped the group can go wrong. I'd never worked with women before joining Jam Today and as a singer—not a musician—I had to compromise in various ways. I'm leaving now to form another



From left to right: Terry, Frankie, Alison, Deirdre and Diana, at a Jubilee Party in Islington, London

Turn on the radio, then turn it off

every song that I hear is about love

loving and losing

no idea of choosing

gets to the point where it isn't enough

Our needs are wider than we ever dreamed

Love isn't enough

(Love isn't enough)

Here's your lunch

Run the bus won't wait

Ten to nine

Kids dropped at school

Fran soldering

Will I make work in time

make work in time

(one pair of hands)

It's not self obsession to be caring for yourself

It's not because I'm smug I drink to my health

When the phone stops ringing you know there's no one else.

(Autonomy)

Josey and Angele recording

band because at this point I want to play standard jazz material. I suppose it gives me more space as a selfish vocalist to improvise, which I haven't been able to do because a lot of our arrangements are very tight—I've often felt they could have a freer form. It's very difficult to voice political statements through music without one being sacrificed to the other. Now I regard myself as a musician and when I work in mixed situations I won't accept any role which is expected of me and I do think I'll find it difficult working with men again.

Deirdre: I'm leaving for similar reasons. There isn't enough space in the way the songs are arranged for me to expand. I felt the role I had was using only part of what I could do. If I'd said I wanted to have solos that would have meant that somewhere somebody would have had to play less—there was quite a good balance between what each instrument did, but it just wasn't enough for me. It's not a decision I took quickly, I felt frustrated but didn't want to take space from others.

Sarah: Maybe your attitude to the role of the guitar has something to do with it—it's conventionally been used as a lead instrument requiring almost a backing band.

Deirdre: But there are basic differences between instruments, the guitar's been brought out as a lead instrument partly because of its qualities—you can't play chords on a sax, for example, but can on a guitar.

Terry: No, it's the hierarchical roles instruments have been given. The bass for example is a new instrument, it's only

starting to develop its potential. The instruments are equal, the inequalities are made by the people who play them.

Frankie: About dissatisfactions... I would've liked us to be more controversial and stimulating. I often hate it when I see men enjoying the music, as far as I'm concerned it's not for them and if we're acceptable within the status quo then I feel we've failed. I'm leaving partly because of the work load. It's a large group and keeping it going can be draining. I don't want to sustain that kind of energy or the life-style that's necessary. I feel that my life is lacking in other kinds of things. You have to think about the band all the time... I didn't want to go on doing that anymore.

Alison: Perhaps we could make it clear that the band isn't splitting up, though four people are going—that's including Josie who's already left in fact. Five of us are staying and feel a very strong commitment. It's a bit early to say exactly what the new band will be like—definitely things will change... it'll be a different line up and hopefully all original material. I'm excited about what we may do. From December we won't do any gigs until March, because we want to spend time working things out. We want the new people to be part of deciding the direction of the band. People may think it's those leaving that have all the dissatisfactions, that's certainly not true and we want the new band to incorporate the things we want.

Fran: I feel excited about the changes. Although there've been principles worked out in the past, there's come a

point I think when the direction of the band should be completely re-thought.

Deirdre: The band I'm joining isn't feminist, though it consists of women. But I don't feel I've gone through my feminist period and now I'm going back to being a musician—the songs I'll be doing won't have sexist lyrics, though they won't have the messages in them that the Jam Today songs had. Other women's bands can affect women by just being women's bands. Look at the impact Fanny had though they weren't feminists—they reached thousands of women, which Jam Today can't, by being commercial and getting publicity.

Terry: How have Fanny reached more women—by saying 'you too can be a superstar'? Most women who started playing an instrument as a result of seeing Fanny will have ended up being exploited and demoralised by the commercial music business. Some may have 'made it' but in any case that's not what we're about—supporting the exploitative music industry.

Angele: But Fanny actually showed the record buying public, who'd only seen male bands before, that there were women who could 'do it'—by going commercial. Jam Today, by not doing so, runs the risk of providing an 'in-service' for feminists and the converted left.

Alison: But you can't be part of the commercial music business without being exploitative. Most of us in the band are totally opposed to that and the way it exploits women and we'll continue to be so no matter how we develop as musicians. □

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Homeworking is about the exploitation of women as mothers tied to the home with toddlers, as daughters left to care for the aged or as immigrants whose vulnerability makes them a cheap and malleable labour force. In the beginning of November Homeworkers Action Groups from all over England met in Birmingham. Chris Poulter from the London group talks about the difficulties homeworkers face and ways they've started to organise.

There are about a quarter of a million homeworkers in Britain today. They are "taken on" to assemble toys, pens and furniture; to package stamps, buttons and filters; to fold, envelope and label advertising material; to knit sweaters, to sew gloves, to tassel football scarves, the list is endless. As with most low paid women's work it's dull, repetitive and labour intensive.

A recent Low Pay Unit survey found that 80% of homeworkers interviewed were getting less than 30p an hour. From one South London firm, homeworkers get 89p for sewing 1000 buttons onto cards which means an hourly rate of between 9 and 10p. Even experienced homeworkers who work at high speed are poorly paid. In Leeds a homeworker with two years experience now tassels ten scarves an hour. Each scarf is worth 4p in wages. For an eight hour day or 80 scarves she earns £3.20.

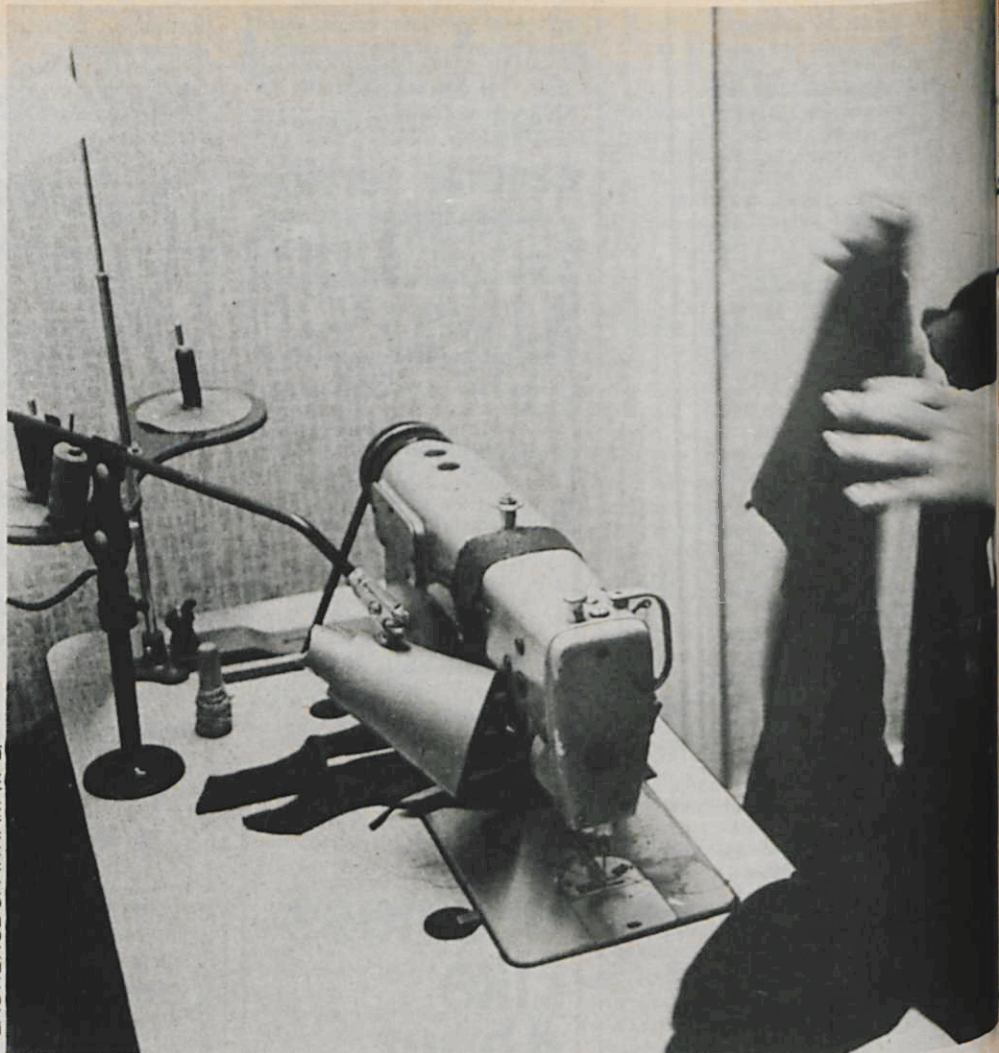
In addition employers often fail to compensate for rent of space, heating, electricity, transport and renting or buying equipment.

Homeworkers have few rights under the law. They are generally considered "self-employed" and so are not covered by the Employment Protection Act. This means they have no job security and get no holiday pay, sick pay, maternity leave or redundancy pay.

Until the government enacts legislation which clearly recognises the "employee" status of these workers, little change is possible.

Some homeworkers are covered by the provisions of the various Wage Councils established to determine wage rates in non-unionised industries. But with no homeworkers directly represented, these bodies have obtained no significant improvement on the inadequate statutory minimum piece rates. Decisions on rates are frequently made in ignorance of the work involved. So the Councils actually sanction and legitimise scandalous rates. The case of the women earning between 9 and 10p an hour sewing buttons on cards is actually covered by a Wage Council agreement!

Homeworkers should also be protected by the 1961 Factories Act which requires employers to register all homeworkers with the local authority. Failure to comply can lead to a £20 fine (no less!). According to the Act, Environmental Health Inspectors are responsible for ensuring that checks are carried out on the health and safety aspects of domestic working conditions. In fact employers mostly ignore the requirement to register and cases of prosecution seem non-existent. In turn local authorities make little effort either to maintain an accurate register or to investigate working conditions.



LAURENCE SPARHAM (IFL)

Sweatshop at home

Historically, the trade union movement has opposed homeworking as a threat to the job security and working conditions of its factory based members. Homeworkers were seen as a dangerous source of non-unionised, cheap labour. This posture is giving way to a recognition that steps must be taken to improve the status and conditions of homeworkers. The TUC has a Working Party which will soon publish its recommendations for legislative change and trade union action, and a number of unions, particularly the General & Municipal Workers Union, are exploring ways of recruiting and organising homeworkers.

This is not easy. The workers themselves are afraid that changes will endanger their earnings whether by upsetting employers, alerting the taxman, or messing up their social security benefits. The work is characteristically isolated and leaves the individual at the mercy of officialdom and the employers, with no collective solidarity. In fact many workers earn too little to pay tax or jeopardise benefits—single parents, for example, can earn up to £6 a week without any reduction in benefit.

Making Contact

In 1975 some community workers in East London started the London Homeworking Campaign to act for better pay

and conditions, as well as for social provisions so that those who wish to work outside the home can do so. The organisation expanded to include activists from trade unions, women's groups, immigrant organisations, local trades councils, community agencies and law centres. At the first national conference this November we mainly shared information about homeworking activity in our areas and discussed our organising strategies.

Representatives of Long Eaton & District Trades Council described their work in the piano trade. Using a survey as the means of contact, trades council members brought workers together to discuss common grievances. As a result 40 of the workers joined the Furniture Timber and Allied Trades Union. They now receive factory rates, the bonuses to which indoor workers are entitled and an additional 7½% to cover overhead costs.

An organiser with the Boot & Shoe Operatives Union talked about a successful drive for unionisation in the Rossendale Valley area. The union has apparently extended its national agreement to cover piece rates for homeworkers.

In Leeds, homeworkers tasseling football scarves are involved in a difficult struggle with their employer, Galaxy Sports. Though some have joined the GMWU, the lack of protective legislation has made it difficult for their union

Payment for staying put

Is Wages for Motherhood the answer to our problems?

—Angela Phillips & Ruth Wallsgrove don't think so.

Britain should consider paying mothers to stay home to care for children instead of encouraging them to take full-time jobs outside the home and having to provide facilities to look after their children during working hours, according to Mia Kellmer Pringle, director of the National Children's Bureau. She feels that "upgrading" the status of motherhood by paying a wage to mothers "is the most cost-effective alternative in more senses than one"—and that the demand for more pre-school childcare facilities is "a facet of the denigration of motherhood". She clearly believes that women would choose to stay home if only they had the money.

In Italy too a Parliamentary committee is looking at a draft bill which would pay salaries of at least £30 a month to housewives in the hope that Italy's women would then relinquish jobs to the two million unemployed men—their instant solution to the unemployment problem.

But is this what women (as opposed to the state) need? Not according to the Thomas Coram Research Institute (part of the University of London) which has done research both into women at home

and nursery facilities.

Researcher Peter Moss feels that "there is a basic misconception about why motherhood has such a low status. It is not related to pay, but is because it is traditionally a woman's job. And if childcare is paid for in this way it will certainly be low pay, and the educated women will use their money to pay for someone else to look after their children. It will be the women who most need a break who will stay at home. Dr Pringle doesn't understand why women work—they work for as many different reasons as men do, it isn't just for cash."

Moss's comments are based on extensive research on depression suffered by mothers with young children. The findings are devastating: the highest referral rates to psychiatric services are among women between the ages of 25 and 34. In two London boroughs, Paddington and Camden, 52% of young mothers interviewed had experienced "severe to moderate distress" in the last year, and studies in 1974 and 76 indicate that over 30% of mothers of three-year-olds have been "significantly depressed" in any one year. And women who want outside work but must stay at home are worst

officer to fight the recent sacking of their shop steward. And the employer has exploited the remaining workers' isolation to coerce them into signing an illegal agreement promising never to join a union.

Home-based glovemakers in Torrington (Devon) encountered fewer difficulties. With the support of unionised workers inside the various firms, homeworkers joined the GMWU and have negotiated rate increases. While still not earning the piecework rates paid to indoor workers, their increases total 42½%.

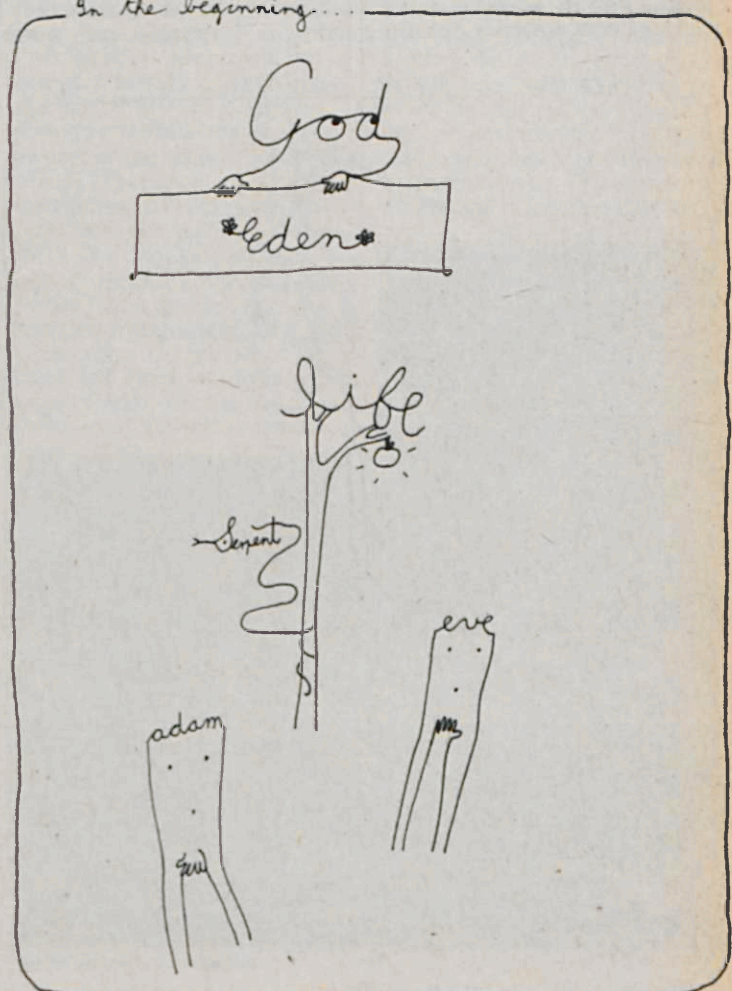
These are the more dramatic achievements. Most organising work has been much slower. Mainly the Campaign has been gathering basic information on the firms which "put out" work—rates of pay, methods of distributing work and inter-company connections. At the same time homeworkers are being contacted for details of their work situation and to gauge support for various strategies for change.

One possibility being explored by women's groups in East London, Saltley (Birmingham) and Manchester is the establishment of co-operative enterprises run by homeworkers themselves. These could eliminate the profiteering of the parasitic middleman.

But the key battle remains, at least in the short term, a legislative one. Without legal protection the efforts of workers such as the Leeds football tassellers may continue to fail, leaving them demoralised. It is up to the unions and the public to pressurise for legislative reform, by exposing this hidden poverty trap. □

Contact Chris Poulter, 131 Kennington Road, London SE11, for further information.

In the beginning...



off of all. They proved to be 50% more distressed than those who wanted to stay at home.

Moss feels that in a society committed to equality—at least on paper—both parents should be given the opportunity to combine parenthood with work outside their homes. The Swedish government agrees: according to a law passed there in 1974 all women and men are eligible for eight months maternity/paternity leave which is paid at 90% of current earnings through national insurance. This is in sharp contrast to this country, where mothers have only four weeks guaranteed paid leave, and where the birth of a baby usually means a drastic reduction in the family income just when more money would be useful. The Swedish government is also currently discussing allowing parents to opt for a six hour day without loss of pay when their children are very young.

British governments have had no policy on women and work since the war. Even the last white paper on nursery education doesn't refer to the position of parents. It's as if the question of childcare and that of women in the labour force were unrelated. There is however an implicit policy: as Moss says, "Women are useful for small booms. But if you invest in childcare (by providing nurseries) you would be investing in women, and would therefore have to keep them in work." Would it be such a big step for the British government to land us with wages for motherhood as a way of keeping us out of the labour force?

One group of women, the Wages for Housework campaign, welcomed the Italian government's proposal to pay women £30 a month. And they're in favour of Dr Pringle's proposals. "We've looked into the statistics and it would be cheaper than nurseries, fostering and

children's homes together. Whatever the reason the government might have for giving us wages for motherhood, if it results in more money for women it's a good thing. They're already cutting down nursery facilities anyway, so it's better that at least we get some money. And any money is better than nothing. It's not the nuclear family per se that isolates women, it's their lack of cash.

"If any section of women gets money it gives all women power. When they get the money, women can subvert the reasons . . ."

Mia Pringle believes that payment for motherhood will magically upgrade the status of mothers, and Wages for Housework think it will give women power. To us it seems more likely that it would simply confirm women in precisely the limited role that the Women's Liberation Movement has been trying to break out of. It would certainly take us further away from a society in which childcare was integrated with the rest of life, and in which women are not automatically banished from all decision making about how our lives are run.

The Swedish laws seem a step in the right direction, but we need to go further in questioning the whole basis of childcare in our society, to think about the involvement of non-parents as well as parents and about communal childcare.

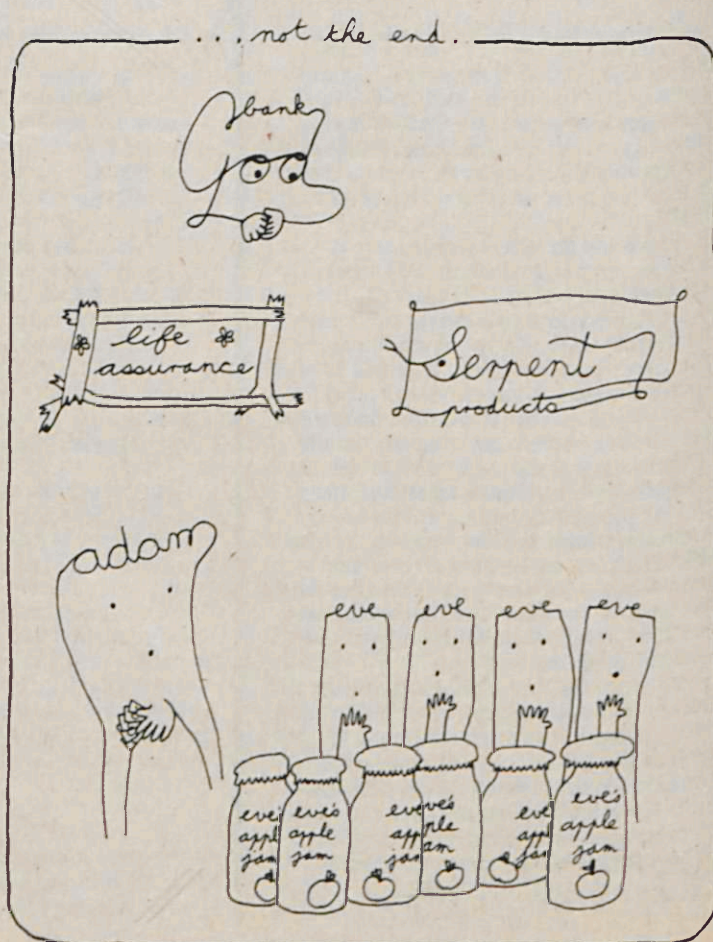
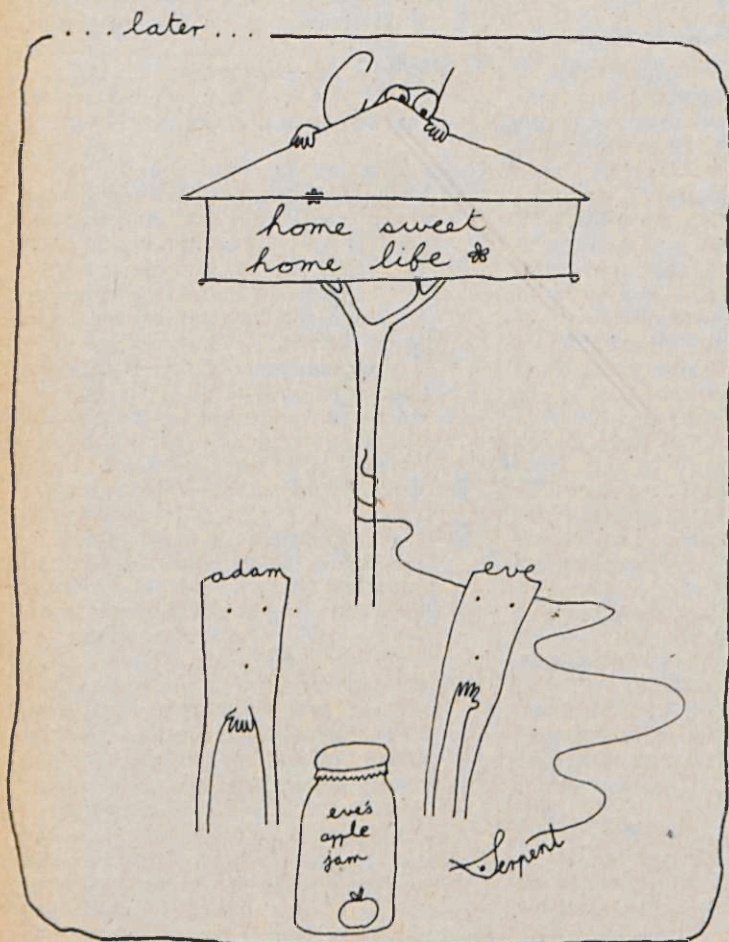
The greatest block to women's liberation is that we are trapped by our children. As isolated mothers women are unable to live fulfilled lives or give their children the stimulation they need; and once at home women are caught in a bind. They cannot leave their children long enough to look for work; the longer they stay at home the less confidence they have in applying for jobs; and the less likely it is that someone will employ them, because they lack 'experience' and, in some areas, up-to-date training. So

mothers have had to choose between the isolation and frustration of staying at home or the worry and exhaustion of holding down two fulltime jobs, leaving their children in working hours with whoever, or whatever will have them—while being unable to fight for better working conditions in their paid work through trade unions. The only other option for women has been to have no children at all. Clearly good childcare is vitally important to us, but this society doesn't recognise its importance. In pushing the issue to one side it has effectively cut women out from all other aspects of life.

The answer to this dilemma is not to resign ourselves to our woman's role—in a woman's place—and demand payment for staying put but to collectivise childcare, to share the responsibility for bringing up children within the community. Only this will allow women—and men—to integrate children and other work, freeing women from the isolation and frustration of the home; only this will give women a base to organise together. Rather than wages for motherhood we want free childcare facilities on a collective basis, in small units under community control; adequate payment for everyone who wants to work in these collective childcare facilities, flexible working hours and better maternity and paternity leave.

Everyone should have the opportunity to be involved in looking after children—everyone can benefit from that involvement, children and adults.

Women's Liberation cannot be achieved without a recognition that childcare is as important as production, and that everyone should be able to be involved in both. We will never achieve this by pushing women back into the home, with or without a wage. □



tv

ROCK FOLLIES ITV

Rock Follies is on the television again, after industrial action by women working on the editorial processes had prevented it from being shown. Opinions about it differ greatly—except for the papers, who unanimously love it, hailing it as a landmark in TV entertainment: witty satire, window on the rock world and so on. But comments we collected from feminists include: "It's like being trapped in Biba's for five days." "I know it's sexist, but sorry, I like it." "It's loathsome, cynical anti-feminist rubbish." "It's just the *Guardian* readers' *Top of the Pops*."

There are also women who say, 'Never heard of it'; nevertheless, it not only has a wide audience, but even a cult following—and, even more significant for us, it claims (or did originally) to proselytize bits of Women's Liberation.

If you're the sort of feminist who feels impelled to work out your reactions to TV programmes purporting to have feminist relevance, then you've probably, like us, had a tough time with this series. It uses endless complex devices, technical, ideological and narrative, which keep fusing and fragmenting till you just don't know where to begin on it. It employs humour, for instance, in such a way that just when you want to hammer a scene into the ground for its sexism, it slips away smirking, 'We're only joking—can't you laugh at yourselves?' We watched a scene where the Little Ladies (as 'rock' and 'women') fought it out with Zero (punk, 'fascism' and 'male aggressor'); presumably in itself a very relevant idea. The three women were dressed for this combat in pastel satin boxer shorts (skin tight), the camera lingering on appropriate creases. Indeed, they win the fight, but their little hands are all delicately wrapped in soft satin boxer mitts; hardly reclaiming the night. Still, who wants strident feminism rammed down their throats at 10.30 in the evening? After all, this is entertainment, and it's about entertainment, so it's doubly fun. And... but we're carping now, it's a programme made by men about... the male dominated music and media worlds.

The programme therefore manages to dodge your own left hooks by presenting itself both as socially relevant and light-hearted at the same time—and it keeps you enthralled by alternating pseudo-information and sub-polemic with televisual treats and rewards. Like this: women discuss tricky financial problem with manager Kitty. Next scene, Kitty in bath, breasts to camera. Or like this: women working at problematic lyrics. Next scene, glamorous performance of sadomasochistic number (only joking, of course). As the narrative jerks along, we're given a sparkly punctuation of a dozen images: tarts, boxers, Pan's People, femmes fatales, and (from time to time) Julie Covington au naturel.

Julie Covington is presumably meant to be the most 'realistic' of the women. That is, the touchstone from which we are meant to make satirical references to the more stereotypical characters, like Q. And this realism is obviously meant to get through to us via the spontaneity of her working-class accent, her no-messing directness ('But that's not ethical!'), and her appealingly simple appearance. That is, she's got short, short hair and she looks a bit scruffy... until the camera gets in there and you can see the lipstick and the contrived disarray of the haircut. After the first two episodes of the original series, Julie had to spend quite a bit of interview time insisting she wasn't a dyke. Her screen boyfriend is now around again, politically ineffectual (of course), he's still the one she turns to after a hard day in the studio, despite the satirising of a radio interviewer who wants to know about her love life, and is summarily put down. Just to reassure us all that too much working closely together won't result in unhealthy feelings between women, we get periodic reminders that blokes are the ones you snuggle up to at night. Actually, these blokes are much less stereotypical than the women—there are even two gay men who are far from camp.

When it all started, this programme was praised widely as having a lot to tell us about women working together in the music world. But now some commentators are beginning to insist that it stands in its own right as highly competent experimental television, that is the sounds and images in themselves are somehow the thing. That it is actually about women is now thought to be entirely

secondary, if at all relevant. The women, in this second series, stick up for themselves slightly more forcefully than one would expect from a total doormat—they keep on and on singing, "You want to do me, but I don't want to be done, OK?" But they seem to be content both as actresses and characters to be peddled in the same old blatantly sexist ways.

The non-feminist audience, vast as it is, must be thoroughly reassured—not for one moment will they be confronted, upset or exposed to the fundamentals of women's liberation. And the feminist audience can either switch off,

shout back, or, as many do, sit back and enjoy it. For we still have to tolerate a wide spectrum of TV fare; most of us have long given up hope of seeing anything that's *really* about feminism and its struggles on anything but the most specialist slots. It seems rather impolite and unreasonable to expect those issues to be reflected in *Rock Follies*, even though they *said* it was going to. So accustomed have we now become to suppression and distortion of the Movement in the entertainment industry.

Susan Hemmings,
Melanie Stiassny,
Maureen Hanscomb

books

MARIE STOPES:

A BIOGRAPHY

by Ruth Hall

(Andre Deutsch £5.95)

"The heading on Marie's clinic writing paper consisted of a rather ill-drawn lamp, emitting radiant beams against the motto: Joyous and Deliberate Motherhood. A Sure Light in Our Racial Darkness"—I'd hoped that this biography might itself do some illuminating of the old tensions between the 'liberating' and the 'reactionary' aspects of the complex history of birth control. Marie Stopes' writings include an exaltation of joy as part of the woman's heterosexual experience; and it's instructive to realise, particularly from the account of the 1923 libel trial she initiates how profoundly shocking this public stress on *pleasure*, dissociated from conception, was at the time. On the other hand, the quasi-feminism which fought so long for this measure of individual sexual

liberation collapsed into her conservative denunciation of 'Mrs Jones', the imaginary class C3 fast breeder who, left uncontracepted, would cause a glut of 'stunted, warped, and inferior infants'.

This reactionary use of eugenicism isn't, of course, peculiar to Marie Stopes. It straggles through the history of the nineteenth and early twentieth century campaigns for fertility control. For instance Margaret Sanger in the United States, the socialist editor of *Woman Rebel*, wound up with slogans like 'More children from the Fit, less from the Unfit'. While Ruth Hall's biography makes evident Marie Stopes' own deeply conservative politics in the simplest sense of 'politics', what it doesn't do is to really place her arguments and work in context. The adjective 'racial' is scattered around



Marie Stopes—two studies

reviews

in her writings, for example. This is obviously pre-fascistic and dangerous—but what sense can we make of its use in a climate where eugenicist opinions were respectable enough to be held in some socialist circles and supported by part of the ILB, the forerunner of the Labour Party, and the Fabian Society?

And the history of sexual libertarianism in general often shows arguments for 'sexual freedom' in whatever guise as leading to *health* (both Reich's work and the writings of utopian communities like Oneida in the States do this, for example). It is as if the idea of any purely private happiness, particularly if experienced by women, had to be justified and transcended on the grounds of public usefulness and improvement. Alexandra Kollontai, in a book review of 1919 (see *Love and the New Morality*) was describing 'the demands of race hygiene' as being 'in the widest sense' the object of 'the demands of the socialist programme'. It is clear from Marie Stopes' biography that this 'widest sense' was not her concern and that her own radicalism was utterly one-dimensional. That doesn't mean that the one dimension, freedom from fear of accidental pregnancy, wasn't itself extremely important. But Marie Stopes treated such subjects as homosexuality, abortion, strikes and class itself with incomprehension or plain reaction. She was a sort of radical conservative; and Ruth Hall's book doesn't manage to give much sense of either her personal impact, whether as an innovator or rather as a skilled propagandist, or of how she matters in the whole history of arguments around sexuality and fertility control. In fact, Keith Briant's autobiography of Marie Stopes (1962) explains far more both about then-current contraceptive techniques and ideas, and about what actually happened at her Holloway clinic. There would have been more point in having a new biography written by someone who was interested in arguments about reproduction—arguments which are crucial for feminism and socialism now.

Ruth Hall's preface says; "She was the central figure in that social revolution by which men, but more particularly women, were freed from the miseries of sexual ignorance and haphazard reproduction. Indeed, compared with her initial struggles, the

activities of the women's liberation movement over the last decade appear in retrospect as mere mopping-up operations after a major battle." These two sentences together are indicative of where I felt this biography failed. For to imply that a change in contraceptive *technique* changes ideas of sexuality, or necessarily alleviates sexual ignorance, is mistaken. Nor does ignorance vanish in a climate of more conventionally-liberal sexual opinion, and nor does unhappiness. The opposite can hold; what about repressive tolerance? And as for mopping-up, Ruth Hall's domestic imagery misses the redrawing of the battle lines.

Marie Stopes can be described as a feminist only in the most narrow terms; the presentation of her in this biography is distinctly non-feminist. She is portrayed as a nasty, vain and silly woman, much given to flowery bossiness. While this may have been quite true, for a biographer of a subject like Stopes to concentrate so heavily on anecdotal detail about her sexual affairs, her letters, her private shortcomings, *at the expense of* any sympathetic interest in the wider issues, seems sad. The biography itself ends up as restrictively 'individualist' as its own subject. Ruth Hall writes, for instance, of 'Marie's high-handed pomposities' in keeping her own name after her marriage, and seems to find it *a priori* absurd that Marie might blame a stillbirth on her medical treatment. She is so badly concerned to deflate Marie Stopes' 'mysticism' about sexuality that she falls into a constantly reductive and snide tone herself. This book is full of valuable detail and good to read for that; but it needs patience to disentangle this from the trivia. To be continually reminded by such heavy sarcasm on the biographer's part that she doesn't like her subject and that the reader isn't going to either, only made me wonder why she should have wanted to write this biography in the first place. (But then, what are biographies for?)

Denise Riley

THE SLAVE GIRL

by Buchi Emecheta

(Allison & Busby, £3.95)

Through the life story of one Ibo girl, sold not simply into marriage but into slavery, Buchi Emecheta's fourth novel shows the solidity of women's oppression in Nigeria.

It's a depressing picture—Ojebeta is uprooted, beaten, humiliated; for a moment rebellious, for a while in solidarity with the other slave girls, then close to a freedom of sorts when her owner's son plans to marry her. But that falls through and the story ends with her husband paying back to the owner's son the money for which her brother once sold her. This in no way buys her freedom—she's merely changing masters.

Nigeria too is changing hands. Slowly Buchi reveals how imperialism and the new religion (Protestantism for the rich, Catholicism for the poor) interact with the old ways, making the world less secure for women but allowing them no new freedom. In fact the invisible new masters take away the power some women had as traders, managing the family economy, working the slaves.

Buchi's austere style controls the pathos and pain of the story, which never becomes sensationalist. But the simplicity of what she calls 'documentary fiction' is deceptive. On one level it says accept, adapt, endure—"No woman is ever free, to be owned by a man is a great honour." And against this there builds up a bitter irony; at the end Ojebeta reassures herself with those very words. Buchi is angry but Ojebeta by then is resigned. You feel she is too trapped even to think about breaking away. That may be realistic but it's what makes the book so depressing.

Jill Nicholls

FEMININITY AS

ALIENATION

by Ann Foreman

(Pluto £2.40)

Ann Foreman's book promises to demonstrate how the work of Marx and Freud can be used to analyse women's oppression. However it does nothing of the kind because of its intensely ideological reading of both these authors: it fails to examine the *relations* between concepts within theories, and the relations between those theories and the objects which they represent.

She argues that it is through the concept of 'alienation' that Marx and Freud can be brought together. They contributed to the breakdown of liberal thought with its emphasis on liberty and personal freedom—freedom premised on the division of life into public and private spheres. And 'private

life' necessarily entails the oppression of women in the home. Marx laid the foundation for a different approach, a political economy which she interprets as a description of the dehumanised form of consciousness in capitalism. Capitalist social relations 'alienate' the human essence from itself. Both Lukacs and the existentialists (de Beauvoir and Sartre) are presented as having developed this insight, with existentialism in particular providing a detailed geography of this 'alienated consciousness'. On the whole, Ann Foreman sees Marxism as having failed to develop this area and thus perpetuated the separation of liberal thought.

She has difficulty in fitting Freud into this schema. She outlines his theories and their importance by asserting (wrongly) that he was the first to draw attention to the problem of sexuality. However as a 'pessimistic liberal' Freud, she asserts, explains the construction of sexuality in trans-historical and universal terms, instead of in historically specific ones. Hence, the theory of the Oedipus complex is offered as the mechanism through which *any* child has to enter culture. She finds his theory of the unconscious useful because it "threw doubt on the very existence of men's rationality and with it the liberal trust in the progressive improvement of society". Man becomes the site of a struggle between rationality (the conscious) and the irrational (the unconscious), two distinct areas of the human mind. His theory of the initial bisexuality of the drives is reduced to an act of 'bad faith' since it represents his inability to posit any sexuality for women that does not refer to the male term. The construction of male and female sexuality is seen as positing a 'norm' of sexual behaviour.

But some parts of Freud's theory are still useful to Ann Foreman's project: principally the notion of the unconscious can be integrated with the existential-Marxist theory of alienation. The unconscious becomes the effect of the alienated consciousness of capitalism. It explains why women don't become aware of their oppression, and particularly how they come to live their sexuality as the object of man's desire. Women embody the structure of alienation themselves. Liberation becomes the recovery of all those experiences to which we were refused access, which were pushed into the un-

reviews

conscious; socialism becomes the economy that does not need the unconscious.

I find this a particularly depressing book. It seems to me to deny all the radical potentiality of both Freud and Marxism for feminists—and it does so in a particularly disturbing way: it provides an outdated, ideological reading of these theories which is seen in the writing itself with its clichés and domestic metaphors—'grasping the nettle', 'mixing about as well as oil and water', and, inevitably, the capitalist 'rat race'. Such language betrays a 'common sense' approach, and what is common sense except that which passes for the most natural in our society, the common sense that asserts women's inferiority to men? Common sense is where ideology passes into the realm of the 'natural explanation'.

Schematically, these are the major problems with the book. First, any Marxism that relies on a notion of 'human essence' tends to subvert itself: Marxism demonstrates how society is an historically determined form of the relation between a socially constructed humanity and an already-worked-upon physical world. To posit a 'human essence' that is prevented from realising itself is to deny the whole intention of the theory towards the notion of the social construction of nature.

Secondly, Freudian theory provides a way to understand the construction of 'feminine' and 'masculine' positions without having to fall back on any idea of essential or innate femininity. This is the real importance of the notion of the initial bisexuality of the drives as Juliet Mitchell argued so

coherently in *Psychoanalysis And Feminism*. Thirdly, Freud absolutely locates the Oedipus complex in the emergence of patriarchy as a social institution through which women are exchanged outside the familial group to prevent incest. It is therefore an historical concept of singular importance for the analysis of patriarchy. Fourthly, the Freudian unconscious does not cast doubt on rationality; it demonstrates that rational logical discourse is constructed in the acquisition of language by the infant, and that this acquisition produces the unconscious as being that which is necessarily refused access to conscious representations. Thus the irrational and the rational are seen to be intimately connected, and rationality is continuously disrupted by jokes, puns, slips of the tongue, etc which reveal more than was (rationally) intended. This challenge to the unity of consciousness is something that Ann Foreman does not seem to have grasped.

The encounter of Marxism and psychoanalysis that the Women's Movement has done much to advance seems to me to enable us to understand the problem of the definition of ideology (about which Marx had little to say), and its relation to class and to economic categories and to the process of political change. It could thus offer a substantial analysis of the place of women in contemporary society and a resultant politics. Ann Foreman's book seems to turn its back on all this potentiality. All it can offer the future is the academic project of simply describing the different forms of consciousness that have occurred over history.

Ros Coward

daughter who is awaiting trial in an Eastern European country for dangerous driving, and one of their mutual friends has just had a foot blown off in a restaurant bombing.

The characters have to keep going in their individual lives, but are also forced to look outward to what is happening in society at large in order to make sense of what is happening to them. This is the closest Margaret Drabble has come so far to writing a consciously 'social' novel; real events we can recognise from the newspapers (Ronan Point) jostle the fictitious events.

It is not an entirely successful book; written in short cinematic episodes it has a jagged, challenging surface. Somehow, despite the overt 'social' content, one feels that the narrator is simply observing reactions to catastrophes. She occasionally comments on her characters, ironically—not herself offering any overview about their reactions. Anthony himself, a fairly ordinary, sensitive middle-class man, ends up in a most extraordinary situation; travelling to bring back Alison's daughter he gets caught up in a civil war, sent to a prison camp, and the last we see of him he's writing a book 'about the nature of God and the possibility of religious faith'. This last episode reverberates back on the rest of the book. None of the individuals takes any active political part in life; all of them are thus simply carried along on the tide of events, surviving because, on the whole, people do survive, compelling to read about because Ms Drabble always enters into the thought life of her characters.

Perhaps her intention was merely to record a set of (mainly) middle-class reactions to '70s crises; there is little in

any of the characters or in the narrator's overview to suggest that anyone really tries to understand the world. The characters' energies are caught up in trying to understand their own motives and intentions, in order to progress in their own lives.

In the earlier novels which were more conventional personal-life novels this didn't matter so much. But this novel does set out to bring us the social context of its characters as well as the characters. Its message is too ambivalent; either it fails to convey the world of the 70s to us because Ms Drabble is not yet confident with the form, or the message is intended to be that individuals are passive in the face of events that faceless people contrive. The individual and the social elements in the novel do not fuse, and the challenging structure is too often merely fragmented.

There is one element in the novel that doesn't quite fit into my analysis; Alison—an intriguing, shadowy figure. She has a wordless breakdown after seeing her daughter Jane. She is facing a female middle-age with her beauty fading. The last brooding sentences in the book are about Alison: 'Alison there is no leaving. Alison can neither live nor die. . . Her life is beyond imagining. It will not be imagined. Britain will recover but not Alison Murray.'

Somehow Alison emerges as a secondary but haunting figure, as though the novel were about her in spite of itself, as though, perhaps, Ms Drabble is still able to be more compelling about her women characters than her men. Perhaps her next novel will tell us.

Micheline Wandor

THE ICE AGE

by Margaret Drabble

(Weidenfeld & Nicolson

£4.25)

The Ice Age reads as a novel of transition; the title refers to the shock period of the 70s, when economic recession and social crisis have affected the lives of even the most cushioned middle-class individuals, leaving them challenged, suspended and waiting for the next age. The novel, written in the third person, is presented mainly through the filter of a male character, Anthony Keating: this is interesting in the context of Margaret Drabble's writing as this is the first time she has taken a man for her 'hero'—a far cry from

the early novels with the chatty, monologue tones of the 'Drabble' heroine—the emancipated intellectual woman of the sixties, no blue-stocking, independent, grappling with a head-on integrity with the condition of being female.

The tone of this latest novel is much more distanced. We are taken on a tour of a 'group of British citizens', all of whom have reached a point in their lives where their individual crises are explicitly linked up with larger political and economic events. Anthony, 38, has just had a heart attack, and is reassessing his life after his property company has floundered (one partner in prison), his girlfriend Alison has to cope with her elder

children's books

NON-SEXIST CHILDREN'S BOOKS IN 1977

1977 has been an unexciting year for non-sexist publishing for older children—the only British book of real note has been Gene Kemp's splendid *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler* (Faber £2.75, winner of the 1977 'Other Award', reviewed SR 56). Few other British writers have made the creative response in their writing to the sex roles' debate that has been ongoing in our society for nearly a decade. And children's book editors

have still not bothered to sensitise themselves to sexism in language or to sexist stereotyping. It is depressing that the overall presentation of sex roles in children's literature remains therefore as limited as it was four years ago when we first began to seek out children's books for review in *Spare Rib*.

The growing demand for non-sexist children's books from concerned teachers, librarians, parents and young readers themselves has led however to the publishing here of more American books.

reviews

Examples this month are paperback editions of Mehdevi's *Parveen* (Peacock 60p; see SR 41) and Kerr's *The Son Of Someone Famous* (Peacock 70p); and the publication in hardback of Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Gollancz £3.50).

The Son Of Someone Famous is a humorous, fast moving book about two failures on the teenage success scene—Brenda Belle and Adam—who decide to go steady with each other for mutual protection. They first meet in a drug store when Brenda Belle is furtively buying a depilatory to get rid of her moustache—she is struggling to achieve the required 'femininity' although she is 'not a beautiful thing' and is not really sure that she wants to be. Adam, the 'son of someone famous' (a Kissinger-type Dad) is hiding behind a false name in order to find himself. The book ends with Brenda Belle deciding to leave her body hair alone and 'go natural' while Adam loses his father hang-ups. The novel is 'written' alternately by Brenda Belle and Adam and the device stands up well—both points of view really come over. Kerr casts a satirical eye at white middle-class small-

town life, and refreshingly reveals her teenage characters to be people, not a special breed of problem.

In *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* Mildred Taylor is one of the first Black writers for children to describe the racial conflicts of the Deep South during the depression. Dynamic girls growing up find society weighted against them anyway, but for 9-year-old Black Cassie Logan the odds against her are almost overwhelming, from the lack of books in school to the fact that she and her brothers must walk there in all weathers, while the white children ride in the school bus. Racial tension increases with rumours of lynchings and burnings, and the Logans are obvious targets for they are the only Black people in the area to own land. The novel has weaknesses of structure and style, but its powerful account of the crucial year in Cassie's life when she learns to survive while still having 'some choice over what she makes of her life' makes it a book that can be strongly recommended to young readers.

Rosemary Stones
(Children's Rights Workshop)

theatre

FLOORSHOW

by Monstrous Regiment

Theatre Group

Monstrous Regiment's revue *Floorshow* demonstrates a shift in subject, time and format, away from historical topics such as the Paris Commune, and witchcraft (dealt with in a chronicle-play form), to the subject of the sexual division of labour now (treated in revue style). This form is a neat one to choose, as it allows for lots of good strong songs with sophisticated rock backing, a dazzling light-surrounded mirror-backdrop, running gags, glittery costumes, plenty of jokes—the ideological pill was well sugared.

Not only sexist ideas around work were attacked by using the revue form; the very form of traditionally male-dominated humour was shown up in the spotlights. We saw women acting as comperes and cracking bitterly funny jokes, and men talking about their own sexism; women refusing to act the ventriloquist's dummy, and men singing

about stereotypical nursery rhymes and minding the baby. All credit not only to the highly professional and skilled performers, both players and musicians, but also to the women script-writers.

I did find the revue slightly over-long for the material it contained, and I also found it slightly idealistic in seeming to suggest that the antagonisms around the sexual division of labour at work outside and inside the home can be laughed at and contained within a male-female dialogue; the feminist struggle is surely more messy, violent and complex than that. Still, the fact that this problem exists indicates how Monstrous Regiment have begun to tackle the problem of writing plays that give men equal parts as protagonists.

However, the men's low-key approach in this show, compared with the women's verve and brilliance, isn't necessarily the way to show support for women, since it creates a slight tension. One example of this was the fact that the women wore the shiny satin costumes while the men and the woman drummer did not; why couldn't they all have glittered?

These reservations apart, it's

NON-SEXIST

PICTURE BOOKS

Picture books in 1977 are not much more encouraging in the depiction of sex roles than the writing for older children, with many of the best books coming from abroad. A British exception is John Burningham's *Come Away From The Water, Shirley* (Cape £2.50, see SR 61), an amusing tale of an independent and imaginative girl.

Of the American titles, *Molly Mullet* (Worlds Work £2.50, see SR 62) by Patricia Coombs should be picked out for the humorous treatment of the sex role issue in an adventure of medieval giant killing—by a 'wheezley, measley, sneezley girl'. This is one of the best pieces of non-sexist writing for the younger age range this year.

The outstanding British non-sexist picture books are *How We Live and How We Work* (Kestrel £1.50 each, see SR 63) by Anita Harper and Christine Roche and the Kids' Book Group. For anyone looking for a book or two to give to children under six for Xmas these must be your first choice.

The latest books of two writers who have already successfully tried their hand at

non-sexist multi-racial society in their picture books should also be noted. Petronella Breinburg's *Sally-Ann in the Snow* (Bodley Head £2.50) can be recommended like its predecessor *Sally Ann's Umbrella* (see Spare Rib 45) for its central depiction of a Black girl—here overcoming her fear of tobogganning, with unusual and vivid chalk and crayon pictures by Ossie Murray. But Sally-Ann comes over as pretty wet alongside Breinburg's parallel *Sean* stories which have more going for them.

Dogger (Bodley Head £2.50) by Shirley Hughes is the story of a forlorn little boy who loses his favourite furry 'dogger' only to retrieve it, with the help of his older sister, from the toy stall at her school Summer Fair. The prolific Shirley Hughes is unrivalled with her relaxed, detailed canvas of the small child's world whether at home, in the street or at the School Fair. (See also her *Helpers* SR 43). *Dogger* is important for the realistic picture of women and men, girls and boys going about their business, with elder sister Bella winning races and generally stealing the show. For under sixes.

Andrew Mann
(Children's Rights Workshop)



'Molly swung the Ogre's sword at the Ogre's shins. He howled a terrible howl.'

reviews

a slick, highly competent show, which I am sure will get audiences laughing and thinking. Catch it while you can; the company is touring the country with the show.

Michele Roberts

Dec 16th New Hall, City University, Islington. 8pm. **FLOORSHOW.** (Org. by Vietnam Hospital Campaign)
Dec 17th/18th Hampstead Town Hall, Haverstock Hill, **FLOORSHOW.** 7.30pm.
Jan 17th-21st Theatre Royal, Stratford East **FLOORSHOW** (Contact theatre for time).
Jan 23rd-25th St Lukes College, Exeter. Kiss & Kill. Jan 26th-28th Bristol Arts Centre - Kiss & Kill.

films

STAR WARS

Directed by George Lucas

It's *Son of Doctor Who* goes *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* on a Journey to the Centre of the Planet of the Apes in the Year 2001! There you have the joy of *Star Wars* for anyone who spent their childhood crunching popcorn in their local Odeon. This film's got everything. There's a beautiful stereoscopic introduction that's a parody and a celebration of all the space operas that never really were Science Fiction. There are about a hundred stars (all kinds), there are ten times as many waltzing space ships as in 2001, there's a Walt Disney comic subplot with a British butler who's somehow managed to find his way into a robot costume, there's an offworld speakeasy with all the extraterrestrials observed in meticulous, hilarious detail (George Lucas didn't direct *American Graffiti* before this one for nothing). There are unbelievable widescreen panoramas of desert and Amer-



Young Luke Skywalker meets an extraterrestrial nasty

indian jungle; thrills, spills (some nice cutting I suppose you'd call it) quite a few laughs. So lay on some popcorn and stop thinking for two and a half hours.

Only for a feminist there are always a few flies in the ointment. It's not the 'woman question' exactly; there's only one, anyway (played by Carrie Fisher—Debbie and Eddie's daughter, for all you *Photoplay* fans of the 50s), and she gets to handle a gun and a few sharp lines from time to time—"Aren't you a little short for a Stormtrooper?" she asks when our hero drops in for a romantic rescue—and she *doesn't* get married in the end, either. It's partly that the last confrontation between wicked warlords and freedom-loving democrats doesn't seem to mean much when you notice that both the councils of war are all-male. Well, the political confrontation isn't *meant* to mean much anyway, it's played half for laughs which makes looking at the film seriously feel a bit like hammering an Easter egg. The egg's definitely all gold, though, and *Star Wars* is grossing more than *Jaws* and has made several millionaires, so it's worth one hard look at least.

To be crude, then, the centre of *Star Wars* is a rite of manhood. Young Luke Skywalker regains his hidden birthright as an astronaut; he learns control and mastery from kindly old Magic Doctor Alec Guinness, he rescues a lovely Princess, he gets a rip-roaring star-pilot for a buddy and he's ready for the final ordeal—when the good guys have to blow up the bad guys, right? Only it so happens the bad guys live in this BIG, ROUND satellite and the only way IN is through this long tight dark TUNNEL with

a little HOLE at the end, and unless somebody can drop a BOMB in this hole The Grand Muff Tarkin will take over the World and . . . need I say more? It's all right on the night, Little Luke drops his load in the hole, the satellite explodes in a shower of white droplets, and the world is made safe for civilisation. Lucas is no fool, and the whole megafuck analogy is explicit enough to keep the grownups giggling while the kids are presumably thinking their usual innocent thoughts of bloodlust and violence over the Maltesers.

I couldn't help leaving the cinema with alternative scenarios unrolling in my head: supposing young Lucia Skywalker were to rescue a handsome young sex-object (Patrick Wayne?), and get together with some sisters to mine the foundations of this HUGE TOWER which was built by the Grand Prick Tarkin who was laying waste to a world's resources and keeping more than half the people in slavery . . . think you could make any money with an idea like that?

Amanda Sebestyen

JULIA

Directed by Fred Zinneman

"A sable coat is fine but it has nothing to do with writing," says Dashiel Hammett (Jason Robards) to Lillian Hellman (Jane Fonda) in one of the conversations that sketches the relationship of these two writers in this film, and you could take it as an epitaph on the film itself. A big production—soft focus, period costumes, tasteful—it has idyllic flashbacks to childhood, lovely still life interiors (faded flowers on a hotel wallpaper against which apples and a brown coffee pot

glow), hackneyed music. It lacks life.

Yet it can't be dismissed. The story is, it seems, a true one. Lillian Hellman had a rich childhood friend (Julia) who was in the end killed doing anti-Fascist work in Hitler's Europe. The centrepiece of the film is about a journey Lillian makes to smuggle money to her, a rather painstaking, heavy reconstruction, many of the details of which I found hard to believe. I was also at times reminded of *The Lady Vanishes* without the wit, which I surely shouldn't have been. But the failure of the action either wholly to convince or excite may be because this is a writer's story, and a story not about action or politics, but about a relationship between two women.

It would have been difficult for any director to dramatise this relationship effectively and perhaps we should applaud Zinneman for trying before we criticise him for failing. Difficult, especially, because it is in many ways an un-lived relationship. For Lillian Julia is an exciting glamorous adventurer who always outdared her. But what is Lillian for Julia? Lillian's love for Julia seems essentially non-reciprocal, and I wasn't convinced either of the brief attempt to suggest a lesbian element in it. Again, this is not Zinneman's attempt to titillate, since Lillian Hellman herself raised this question in the book *Pentimento* from which the film derives, and was also famous for *The Children's Hour*, a play about just such a frustrated lesbian relationship.

But to introduce the question of lesbianism is to detract from the real interest of the relationship, which is that between an activist for whom all life lies in the struggle, and a spectator, a writer for whom the essential in life is to get it onto paper, who takes action and transforms it into art; is herself abstracted from life, yet gives it a permanence it would otherwise lack. This is the 'crystallisation' of which Stendhal wrote in relation to love—like a branch thrown into a salt mine, an idea is dipped in the unconscious, the imagination of the writer and re-emerges transformed, unrecognisable, encrusted with the crystals of imaginative reconstruction.

In this film the 'crystallisation' doesn't quite happen. This may be because in concentrating as it must on Lillian as the central character it loses any sense of what Julia is really like; a distortion that is

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COMPENDIUM

reviews



Jane Fonda and Vanessa Redgrave at sea in *Julia*

reinforced by the acting, for while Jane Fonda acts marvelously as Lillian, Vanessa Redgrave's appearances fail to convince—she just looks, as usual, slightly mad. But it is a more difficult part, because after all *Julia* is less a real woman than a romantic inhabitant of Lillian's imagination.

I have a deeper, moral doubt about the film. It is not a sexist film, so that although it cannot be called positively feminist, it must be judged as an honest attempt to portray an ambiguous and unsensational relationship unsensationally. Perhaps it is the new version of

the 'woman's picture'—but how much better than the ones in which Bette Davis wonderfully suffered in the Forties. Yet—I said it was tasteful; and it is—too tasteful. Subtly the whole thing is glamourised. Lillian's clothes do after all look like Annie Hall's—the latest trendy gear. And it's so safe to be liberal about the anti-fascists of forty years ago. There could be no big budget movie about the Julias of today. No—I don't like deodorised revolution; it's neither art nor politics, and that's where this film not only falls flat, but betrays.

Elizabeth Wilson

STAND TOGETHER

by the Newsreel Collective

Watching the film in November made by the Newsreel Collective for the Grunwick strikers in July is a disheartening experience; the hopes placed in the effectiveness of mass Trade Union action to win the dispute seem ironical now.

The Newsreel Collective's policy is to share as much control as possible over the film-making process with the group for whom the film is being made. There was considerable disagreement between the Collective and Jack Dromey, highly influential on the strike committee, who didn't want too many shots of 'middle-class feminists', nor too many

exposes of the tactical sell-out on July 11, the first Day of Action. The final version is a film about the power and the glory of the TU movement which asks too few questions about issues central to the dispute—why isn't the fact that the majority of the strikers are women and black taken seriously? Why has the militancy of the support strikers (as in the Post Office) been consistently defused? Why has the TU leadership been able to sell the strikers down the line?

The film was made as, and has been used as, a means of gathering support in TU branches around the country: given this purpose, it's an effective piece of work. Starting with a history of the dispute by interview with the strikers (mostly women) and

those people closely involved, it then focusses on the events of July 11: the crowds, the coaches, the banners, the clenched fists, the police phalanxes, the battles for the gates. The message is straightforward—the dispute will be won by the rank and file standing together.

How were the women presented? The women strikers gave the hard facts about pay and conditions in the factory—the film began and ended with close-ups of their faces; a good touch at the end was shots of their children sitting it out on the picket line—the creche that never happened? Ms Desai featured a good deal; the image of her as a tiny, heroic and therefore exceptional woman has been put over too often by the left media. This was given a nice twist by a sequence featuring the porky hand of a TUC big-wig on Ms Desai's shoulder. Apart from the staggering sexism displayed by the man, the implication was that the hand of the TUC leadership is no more than a dead weight. Feminist pickets and supporters weren't in great evidence; if Dromey had had his way, the two shots and interviews of feminists, and the one shot of the Women Against Racism and Fascism banner, would have been cut out completely. And then there was the Yorkshire miner who related how he'd brought down 50 of his men to support the 'lads' at Grunwick. And one woman supporter was heard to say, "No, I'm not a trade unionist, I'm a housewife."

The Grunwick dispute has been fought as a demand for Trade Union rights—but it's a pity the film did not question more clearly the contradictions that exist in the TU movement or properly examine why July 11 ceased being a successful mass picket and became "a walk all round bloody London".

Is it likely that there will be any more mass picketing outside Grunwick? Calls are now being made to mount a hunger strike, occupy Len Murray's office, picket Transport House, organise a one day of unofficial day strikes. Plenty of ideas, and the strike committee hasn't given up hope of persuading the postal workers, water board and LEB workers to cut off essential services to the factory. But I get really angry when I think how disillusioned those women who've stood outside Grunwick for 15 months must be with the cry for trade unionists to stand together.

Judy Baine

BIRTH

prod: Helen Brew

commentary: R D Laing

You would have thought childbirth might be *one* area in which men didn't try to tell women what it was all about. In *Birth* Laing's philosophy of how childbirth should be is as unsubtle as the one he slams.

The film attacks medical intervention in hospitalised births, both the extent to which it is used and some of the methods. It shows labours and births interspersed with film of mothers (never fathers) talking about their birth experiences. And of course R D Laing commenting. He attacks routine inductions, shaving, forceps, etc, and tells us how childbirth is now defined by the—surprise—male-dominated medical profession instead of by the women who have the babies.

It is indisputable that a vast proportion of medical intervention in labour and birth is medically unnecessary and not infrequently harmful. Yet the film ignores the variety of organisations and individuals (mostly women) who have been engaged for years in the struggles against it. Also, the presentation of such intervention techniques in the film is manipulative and designed to shock us into agreement on the basis of an immediate emotional reaction. As, for example, the nightmarish amplification of sound; the severed umbilicus likened to a cut throat; the unusually bloody baby who could have been born in any situation, including the ideal, and whose coating of blood (the mother's anyway) is no real comment on the baby's experience.

Nature Rules is Laing's simple epithet—"the baby knows best what it wants". So the film suggests, for example, that an episiotomy is intrinsically an assault. As a routine procedure this is often true. But what about the instances when it is used to protect the vulnerable head of a premature baby? When medical technology and intervention can save lives and promote health, how are we then to understand Laing's argument? It can be beautiful to give birth in friendly surroundings without drugs, monitors and the current trappings of hospital procedure. But Laing succeeds merely in replacing modern medical dogma and authority with his own, equally inadequate to the individual woman's

CHRISTMAS BUYS

We haven't space to review all the books that come to us, so below is a list of some of the titles received, most of them since June, which we thought readers might want to know about.

FICTION

Lady Oracle Margaret Atwood (Andre Deutsch £4.95)
A Book Of Common Prayer Joan Didion (Weidenfeld £4.25)
A Sea Change Lois Gold (W H Allen £3.95)
The Woman Warrior Maxine H Kingston (Allen Lane £4.50)
Love Of Worker Bees Alexandra Kollontai (Virago £2.50)
Johnny I Hardly Knew You Edm O'Brien (Weidenfeld £3.65)
Johnny Panic And The Bible Of Dreams Sylvia Plath (Faber £4.95)
Lovers And Tyrants Francine du Plessix Gray (Deutsch £4.95)
Attachments Judith Rossner (Cape £4.50)
Between Life And Death Nathalie Sarraute (Calder and Boyars £1.95)
Earthly Possessions Anne Tyler (Chatto and Windus £4.50)

WOMEN'S STUDIES

Becoming Visible: Women In European History Ed. Bridenthal and Koonz (Houghton Mifflin 8.50 dollars)
Women's Liberation In China Claudie Broyelle (Harvester £3.50)
Midwives And Medical Men Jean Donnison (Heinemann £6.50)
The Feminists Richard J Evans (Croom Helm £8.95)
The Feminist Movement In Germany Richard J Evans (Sage £4.50)
The Dark Angel: Aspects Of Victorian Sexuality Fraser Harrison (Sheldon £6.50)
About Chinese Women Julia Kristeva (Marion Boyars £5.95)
Literary Women Ellen Moers (W H Allen £7.50)
Women In Medieval Society Ed. Susan Mosher Stuard (University of Pennsylvania Press £4.00)
What Society Does To Girls Joyce Nicholson (Virago £1.35)
The Suffragette Movement Sylvia Pankhurst (Virago £2.95)
Abortion Potts, Diggory and Peel (Cambridge £5.95)
America's Working Women: A Documentary History 1600 To The

Present Ed. Rosalyn Baxandall, Linda Gordon and Susan Reverby (Vintage 6.95 dollars)
Passages Gail Sheehy (Corgi 95p)
A Literature Of Their Own Elaine Showalter (Princeton 17.50 dollars)
Androgyny: Towards A New Theory Of Sexuality June Singer (Routledge £2.95)
George Sand And The Victorians Patricia Thomson (MacMillan £6.95)
Coming Out Jeffrey Weeks (Quartet £3.95)
Menstruation And Menopause Paula Weideger (Delta £3.50)
A Feast Of Words: The Triumph Of Edith Wharton Cynthia Griffin Wolff (Oxford)

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND BIOGRAPHY

The Passionate Shepherdess: Aphra Behn 1640-89 Maureen Duffy (Cape £7.50)
It Changed My Life Betty Friedan (Gollancz £5.95)
Working Lives: Volume 2 Hackney 1945-77 (Centreprise 95p)
Dutiful Daughters Ed. Jean McCrindle and Sheila Rowbotham (Allen Lane £5.95)

ART

From The Centre: Feminist Essays On Women's Art Lucy Lippard (Dutton £4.40)
Women Artists: Recognition And Reappraisal From The Early Middle Ages To The Twentieth Century J J Wilson and Karen Petersen (Harper Colophon £4.45)
Women Artists 1550-1950: An Exhibition Catalogue Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin (£7.50)
Female Artists Past and Present: A Directory Of Women Artists by the Women's History Research Center Inc, 2325 Oak Street, Berkeley, Cal. 94708
Art Talk: Interviews With Women Artists Cindy Nemser (Scribner £9.75)

POETRY

Selected Poems Erica Jong (Panther 95p)
Minefield Judith Kazantzis (Sidgwick and Jackson £1.00)
45 Mercy Street Anne Sexton (Secker & Warburg £3.90)
A Bonus Elizabeth Smart (Polytantric Press £1.95)

labour and birth experiences and the routine hospital procedures.

The best parts of the film showed women discussing their experiences—but they were only allowed a supporting role to the star.

THE CHICAGO MATERNITY CENTRE STORY

(Kartemquin Films)
 Whereas in *Birth* no analysis is offered, no suggestion that the contemporary vision and definition of childbirth might be related to capitalism and patriarchy, *The Chicago Maternity Centre Story* tells us of the political fight to keep the centre open and the relationship between medicine and private business interests, in this instance in Chicago.

The Centre was established over 75 years ago, and helped thousands of women to give birth at home with a far lower infant mortality rate than the city's hospitals, and at a far lower price.

The fight to maintain the

centre is too general to be satisfying, failing to confront the divisions and contradictions within the campaign itself, as for instance between doctors and mothers. The exposition of big business control of medicine in the US was confusing and implied a conspiracy between certain wealthy personalities—sadly, since such a theory only hinders an understanding of capitalism and medicine.

The CMCS is well worth seeing just for the film of a black woman giving birth in her home surrounded by family and friends. It's a lovely (and complicated) delivery supervised by an experienced, practical midwife; unromantically yet sensitively filmed.

Nadine Cartner

WELCOME TO L.A.

(and good riddance)

Willkommen in Bullshitland with another sickie from the Altman school of contemporary social criticism. Miss it.

Ali

rather, the arrangement must fit around her, but there are some musical anomalies. The heavy-handed rock beat that follows her most ebullient moods is not only unsympathetic but effectively limits her considerable range of vocal colourings.

On this new album Joan Armatrading is concerned with the themes that have haunted all her work: sex and romance, love and affection and the contradictions between them. She herself is consistently urban. On the earlier *Back to the Night* she celebrated "like a skinny burlesque queen", the neon skyline. Not for her the cornfields and blue horizons of folk nostalgia. This woman is definitely 'of' the city.

So at one moment we find her strutting down the street looking for romance, sexual satisfaction and conquest; a feeling underlined by optimistic rhythms. The next minute she's alone, scared, haunted by the familiar fear of male threat lurking in the shadows outside: *Woncha Come On Home* appeals for the protection she can only find in a lover.

This appeal, a demand to be loved, a demand for response, crops up again and again in her songs. Indeed there is a terror of the lover who has gone cold, of powerlessness in the face of the other's immunity and evasion. The demands are random, reactive, the kind that women have refined to defend themselves in situations where they are powerless.

Still, her songs often affirm sexuality in a way that defies the notion that it is something women receive yet seldom initiate. *Never Is Too Late* finds the singer lonely but forcing herself to make a move, to make some contact. Whether for a minute, a night, or for a while is immaterial, it is the drive to seek it out that is important.

Musically, Joan Armatrading is interesting, but despite the fact that here she has moved some way from the restrictions of her earlier style, the ambiguity remains. She is enjoyable on a certain level but *Show Some Emotion* is comfortable and ultimately conventional.

Beatrix Campbell and Val Wilmer

music

SHOW SOME EMOTION (A&M)

Joan Armatrading

A lack of commitment has always characterised Joan Armatrading's work. Just as she is unwilling to commit herself politically, to come up with what some of her admirers and supporters would like to hear, so she has remained musically ambiguous.

The mood of her earlier work was often taut and subdued, her meanings hidden

behind economic phrasing and musical arrangements that were often brusque. But her last two albums have shown a shift away from that earlier economy into a mood less oblique and, consequently, less defensive.

Producer/engineer Glyn Johns keeps things simple on *Show Some Emotion*, providing a kind of streamlined warmth to go with Armatrading's selling as a star. (She now rates highly enough with the record company to appear wrapped in soft brown packaging with a graze of glitter.) She is still a singer who will not 'fit into' an arrangement,

FEMINIST IMPROVISERS

At the week-long Music for Socialism festival at London's Almost Free Theatre in November, a group of feminist improvisers put on some music which combined the look and sound of domestic equipment (vacuum cleaner, food-mixer, washing-up bowl) with their conventional instruments (oboe, bassoon, saxophone, trumpet, cello, bass, keyboards) and voices. They contrived to, as one of them put it, "transfer the sound of women's work into the work of women's sounds".

By dressing up they also showed how conventional 'feminine' clothing and makeup restrict the musician. By treating improvisation as something springing directly from women's experience, they were able to draw into their music women who might not otherwise be concerned with the concept of free improvisation. They intend to continue working together.

Val Wilmer

EYE TO EYE

by Tina Reid

The eye shone down on her like a brilliant blue UFO. It was beautiful, celestial; it was one of two. Together they were invincible, a pair of bobby dazzlers. Lou had examined both many times, though never before point blank. Soon after Mark moved into the house, Lou had taken to sitting up with him a late hour or two almost every night. Just sitting, just talking over the big brown tea-pot in the kitchen that had been hers and Dave's until the joint decision to open up the house, and their lives, a little. While Dave was out at a meeting, or slept exhausted after a meeting, Lou and Mark would explore this and that: fascism and feminism, Lewisham, Grunwick; tea and empathy for two.

Mark had a cool clear voice which elucidated issues and carved precisely round tactics. His voice proceeded from A to B, but his blue eyes danced in counterpoint. They put the flesh on his bony if upright words. Where his tongue was dispassionate, his eyes were compassionate. While his tongue spoke of means, his eyes spoke of ends: warmth and caring, collectivity, creativity, unity and dignity. Oh, it was lyrical. A regular Rogers and Hammerstein act, these eyes and this voice.

Lou scrutinised again the one eye just now available to her. You wouldn't credit it. There it sailed, lovely, lambent, gentle, serene. The same as ever; and utterly different from what was going on three foot farther down the bed.

Down there, it wasn't so much the thud thud that confounded her. It was more the crooked fingers sunk a good half-inch each into her buttocks. That, and the way her arms were pinned and immobilised by his, not to mention the dead weight pivoted breath-takingly on her thorax. Lou checked it out. The only parts of her body that she herself could operate were her legs from the knees down, but not so as he'd notice. Good God, only last weekend she'd stuffed and trussed a chicken, at least it was dead. Lou groaned and closed her eyes, shut out his, that wreckers' beacon. Her mind sped away like a liberated wheel from a car crash.

This was it. For this Dave, her good comrade and co-parent, had, unasked, in good faith and mortal terror, taken himself off to a weekend conference up North. So that she could practise the theory of relationships they'd arrived at together. So that nothing as crass as his fear would stop it. So that the co-operation between Lou and Mark wouldn't be confined to duplicating leaflets. So that the communication between them need not be checked at the arbitrary frontier of sensuality. And so this person in whom she'd heard a socialist tongue and seen feminist eyes had, invited, occupied her like an imperialist. She couldn't believe it.

Snap. Lou's head cracked back and forth and she was eye to eye with the invader. He'd pulled her upright onto his lap, her legs wagging impotently behind his back as he bounced her vigorously up and down. She had to hang on to his neck for fear of breaking hers. Despite the blur, on the way up and on the way down, Lou caught the warmth and unquestionable beauty in Mark's eyes. He really means it. He's not kidding. Lou's attention skidded back. He thinks we're really making love. He thinks we're really speaking to each other. But he can't possibly hear my body, he's not even listening. He thinks he recognises me, but he's not really looking. He's touching, but he can't feel a thing. Shit! But how can I tell him so's he'll hear, how can I show him so's he'll see? I can't whisper above a din. I can't force gentleness on him. Might as well be a five-foot Asian shouting at a big fat bomber, Stop it, you're hurting me! Napalmed. But before that, those others, the monks, they burned themselves. Yes, that's what you do when you're dissident and powerless. Use what power you have in the one area you control. Self-immolation. Perhaps that's what this was. Perhaps it happened every night throught the land, millions burning themselves in their beds.

Come on, now, it's only a fuck. Again Lou wheeled back. It's only a fuck with a good kind person she knew well and fancied even better. She must stop being passive, after all she could move her arms now. Lou manoeuvred herself onto her knees, the better to stroke this tender skin, to reach with her mouth his innocent eyes.

Mark sighed, collapsed slowly forward and crushed her legs double. He didn't mean to. He meant well. That was the trouble. That was it. He cared for her and knew what was best for her. Only he didn't know her at all. What's more he didn't know he didn't know, being blind beyond his own eyes, deaf beyond his own noise and numb beyond his own skin. He didn't know that either. He was a Victorian missionary stuck up the Amazon.

Only a fuck, Lou thought viciously, fighting to free her legs. OK, but here is one little end of a long continuum. Or maybe it's the great broad base for the whole pyramid. Love without listening is violent. The giant hand that lifts the mother of toddlers to the 19th storey of the tower block is moved by brutal tenderness. It's even possible that in the hearts of those who ravished Vietnam, trembled not only fear of reds, yellows and diminishing markets, but also ignorant love, protective knowing-what-is-bestness. But you need not look so far. Oh brothers, sisters, how many seminal events have you mis-read in your own beds?

Lou arched her back to release her cramped limbs and Mark in response kissed her. A few minutes before, in the first tentative fumble before the rough tumble, Lou had smacked these lips, these delicious soft things, with loving relish. Now, a few minutes later, they tasted bad, of her own lies mostly. She couldn't let him in there. She'd had kids. She was used to opening her legs to almost anybody and pretending it didn't mean anything. But she couldn't let him into her head. Not abdicate all responsibility to historical forces. Besides she didn't like it.

Lou gnashed her teeth against his, incidentally biting his tongue, and yelled. Mark, wires crossed to the last, roared back, then fell like a stone. Dropped into her crevices as a house settles on its foundations. Cemented together there by sweat and the other secretions peculiar to love, Mark heaved for his lost energy and Lou rocked with grief or pity or laughter or anger. In a while Mark opened one incandescent eye. He said, "I love you." She said, "I have to pee." And who was the more sincere?

Well. She could either lie outright, or mumble deceptively and pretend to fall asleep. Or she could say the kids were moaning and hadn't she better lie down with them for a bit. Or she could do the right thing, tell the truth, even unsolicited and then try to explain it all. Protect and educate, those were the watch-words of constructive criticism. But oh god, Marx, Reich, someone, what a job! First the bewilderment, then the hurt, then the anger. It would be like an action re-play of her own just past experience, only in much slower motion. There'd be empathy to push past too; he wouldn't be the only one in the bed ever to have felt 'sexually inadequate'. And he'd never see what it had to do with the GLC or the Pentagon. There just isn't the vocabulary. It was too bloody much. It would take all night and the baby woke at 6.30. It would take weeks, with her, the victim, licking his wounds. Lick them she'd have to if there was to be any hope for the relationship. Poor thing.

There was a nasty groove round her bum when she finally left the lavatory, refused the impulse to poke the baby awake, and slid back into bed beside Mark. He was fast asleep. Lou slid out again.

Running away to her own bed, chickening out, just like a chick, trussed chicken; in the morning she could always say that thing about the kids crying. That's all she'd say. Dave would come back, possibly never to lie easy in his bed again, but convinced of a small shuffle forward. Mark would stay ignorant, intact; though, rejected, the small imperialist within would grow stonier. And she was a coward for sure. Must get a couple of hours before the baby gets up. Jerked alert by a rustle that could have been defoliant over the forest, or Mark's feet on the landing, but was only rain down the chimney, London rain; if I can't take on this little struggle in my territory, my person, with such a small and well-disposed opposition, what about the revolution? Maybe that was easier. There, there was solidarity. Here, the only possible solidarity was between opponents. Fucking hell!

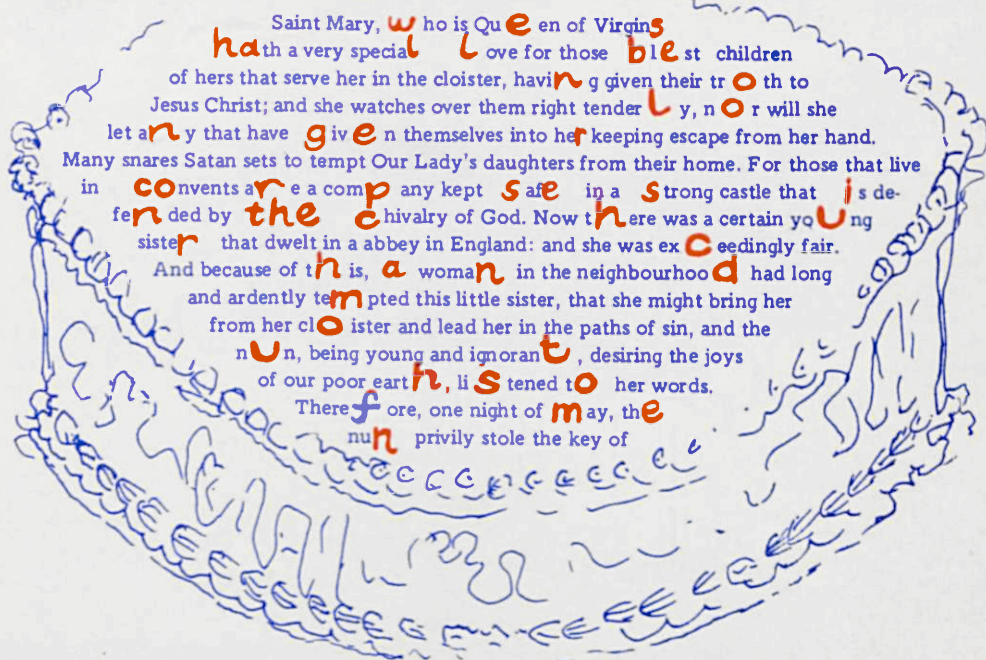
Fucking hell, then the whole household slept for a bit. □



1. Make up a traditional rich heavy cake according to the rules of *The miracles of Our Lady*: Saint Mary, who is Queen of Virgins, hath a very special love for those blest children of hers that serve her in the cloister, having given their troth to Jesus Christ; and she watches over them right tenderly, nor will she let any that have given themselves into her keeping escape from her hand. Many snares Satan sets to tempt Our Lady's daughters from their home. For those that live in convents are a company kept safe in a strong castle that is defended by the chivalry of God. Now there was a certain young sister that dwelt in an abbey in England; and she was exceedingly fair. And because of this, a woman in the neighbourhood had long and ardently tempted this little sister, that she might bring her from her cloister and lead her in the paths of sin, and the nun, being young and ignorant, desiring the joys of our poor earth, listened to her words. Therefore, one night of May, the nun privily stole the key of the

Recipe for Icing A Christmas Cake

Michele Roberts, who has organised the poetry page for two years, is leaving at Christmas. She left readers her favourite recipe.



Saint Mary, **w**ho is **Q**ueen of **V**irgins
hath a very special **l**ove for those **bl**est children
of hers that serve her in the cloister, **h**aving given their **tr**oth to
Jesus Christ; and she watches over them right tender **l**y, **n**or will she
let an **y** that have **g**ive n themselves into her keeping escape from her hand.
Many snares Satan sets to tempt Our Lady's daughters from their home. For those that live
in **c**onvents are a **c**omp any kept **s**afe in a **s**trong castle that **i**s de-
fended by **th**e **c**hivalry of God. Now **th**ere was a certain **y**oung
sister that dwelt in a abbey in England: and she was ex **c**eedingly fair.
And because of **th**is, a woman in the neighbourhood had long
and ardently **t**empted this little sister, that she might bring her
from her cl **o**ister and lead her in the paths of sin, and the
nun, being young and ignoran **t**, desiring the joys
of our poor earth, **l**is **t**ened to her words.
There **f**ore, one night of **m**ay, the
nun **p**rivily stole the key of

- Sift some icing sugar into a bowl:
- Add red colouring and mix well:
- Pipe carefully onto the cake, using an icing-bag:

5. Warning: compulsive idealists who ignore the fruitcake of history and eat only the icing—

**we shall be no longer corpses in the church
and in mouths of men**

—are liable to suffer from spiritual indigestion.

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&
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See how many words of 4 or more letters
you can make from the title of the Old
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